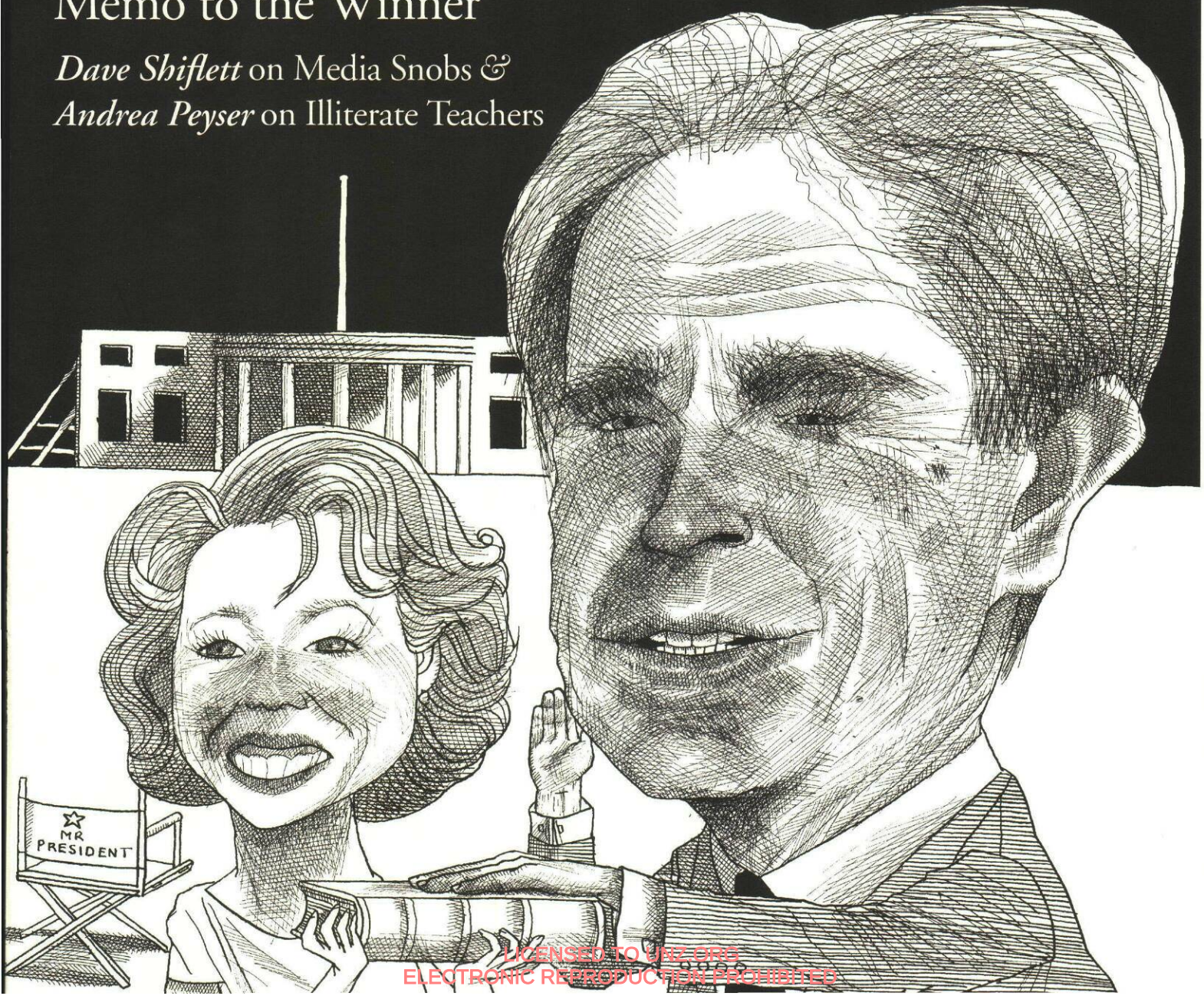
The Journal of the Independent Women's Forum ◆ Autumn 1999 ◆ No. 21

The Women's Quarterly

First Ladies-in-Waiting
Meet the Contenders

Peggy Noonan's
Memo to the Winner

Dave Shiflett on Media Snobs &
Andrea Peyser on Illiterate Teachers



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Diary

Goddess Gals

As a new millennium begins, I must admit that I am grateful to have been born in this much-maligned last century of the old one. Otherwise, I imagine myself—a single gentle lady decidedly not in possession of a fortune—as a governess.

Please don't think I'm knocking governesses—how long before pretentious yuppies begin to call the women who manage their children "governesses" instead of "nannies"?—but I am ill-suited to keeping order in the nursery.

While I might not have minded reading to particularly well-behaved children, I prefer editing *TWQ*. So we have come a long way—not all of it bad. Still, as we sit on the precipice of the new millennium, I find myself disturbed by the fascination many women have for something from our myth-enshrouded distant past.

I refer, of course, to goddess worship, which is being revived today in the fervent bosoms of New Age enthusiasts. At the risk of sounding silly for writing about this parody-worthy phenomenon—remember the hilarious feminists howling at the moon in the movie *Citizen Ruth*?—I think the goddess thing is no laughing matter.

For one thing, it's grounded in pop anthropology. For another, they've got their goddesses all wrong. Ancient goddesses were mostly deities who make Yahweh of the Old Testament—at His plague-hurling fiercest—look like a pushover. I recall one particularly delightful goddess from my days of studying Latin poetry (perhaps I might have been a great governess after all) who inspires a man to emasculate himself. This goddess was certainly not the warm, maternal deity that some modern goddess-worshippers have in mind.

What was the ancient prototypical goddess like? The girls on television's *Friends* may call upon her for help with getting dates, as they did on one episode. But as Catullus—the Roman administrator and poet whose poem I remember—portrayed her, she was truly frightening.

Catullus' verse is about Attis, a young athlete who "with a sharp flint" unmans himself to become a votary of the Great Goddess Cybele. Naturally, there is a lot of frenzied dancing with clashing cymbals and noisy tambourines as Attis—now a "counterfeit woman," as translator C. H. Sisson puts it—leads fellow goddess-worshippers into a sacred Phrygian grove, exhorting them to follow his example.

But the next day, after Attis has had a chance to sleep off the festivities, he realizes that he's made a horrible mistake. I can still picture my Latin professor reading Attis' lament about the thing done that cannot be undone (at least not with the surgical techniques of 54 B.C.):

There is nothing for me but misery.
What shape is there I have not had?
A woman now, I have been man,
youth, and boy;
I was athlete, the wrestler. . . .
There were flowers all over the house
When I left my bed at sunrise.
Shall I be a waiting maid to the gods,
the slave of Cybele?

Unfortunately, Cybele wasn't very sympathetic. Just when you think things can't get worse for this do-it-yourself John Wayne Bobbitt of Asia Minor, Cybele, "letting her lions off the leash," sends the beasts to scare the daylights out of him/her. It worked—he/she "flew into the wild woods," where "for the rest of her life she lived as a slave."

You would think that the horrific Cybele would have few current followers. But you would be wrong. Seems this version of female empowerment appeals rather nicely to a certain group of *fully* liberated women. And today we can find their meditations—where else?—in Internet chat rooms.

As one muse to another, two Cybele goddess-worshippers recently exchanged the following thoughts about Catullus' poem on the Net:

One opined that Catullus was "terrified of being pulled into the mystery of transformation"—some mystery...being turned into a eunuch!—while the other complimented Catullus for his "sonnets of love," not typical of other Latin poets who wrote of horrid things like "manly duty and military prowess."

The latter critic pointed out that Christians had "destroyed" most of the historic documentation of Cybele's cult, suggesting that Catullus' poem had survived only because "transphobic" readers (*i.e.*, Christians uncomfortable with transgendered individuals) mistakenly interpreted the poem as an attack on goddesses. Tortured logic, but there you have it.

Perhaps it is the governess in me, but I read the poem as a haunting evocation of regret. I believe that the two visionaries of the chat room—and, indeed, many modern women who "worship" the goddess, in all her guises—have refashioned the past to fit modern ideologies. They live in an imaginary world. May the 21st century bring an acceptance of reality, no matter how hard and immutable it sometimes seems.

~Charlotte Hays

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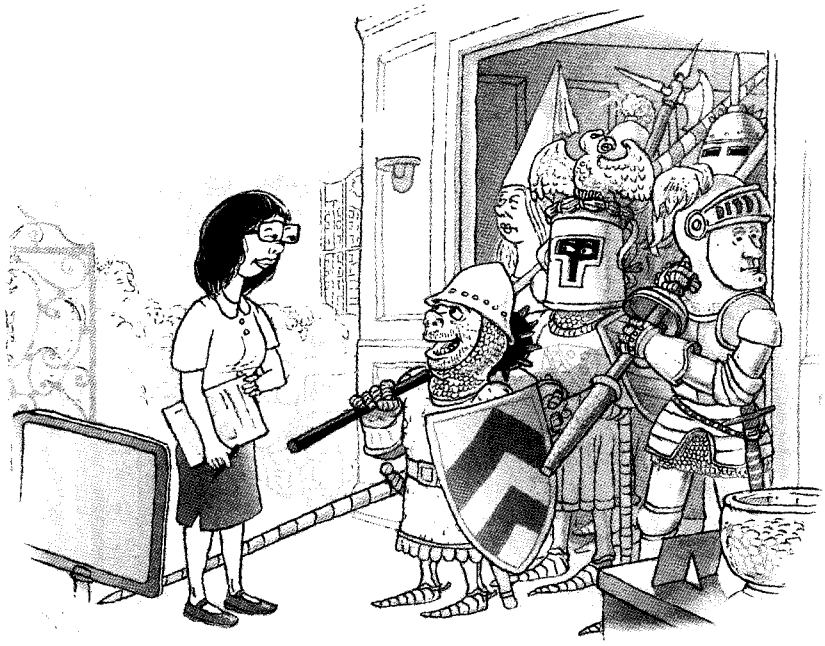

"A round table, please!"

Cover by John Springs. Cartoon (above) by Charles Jaffé

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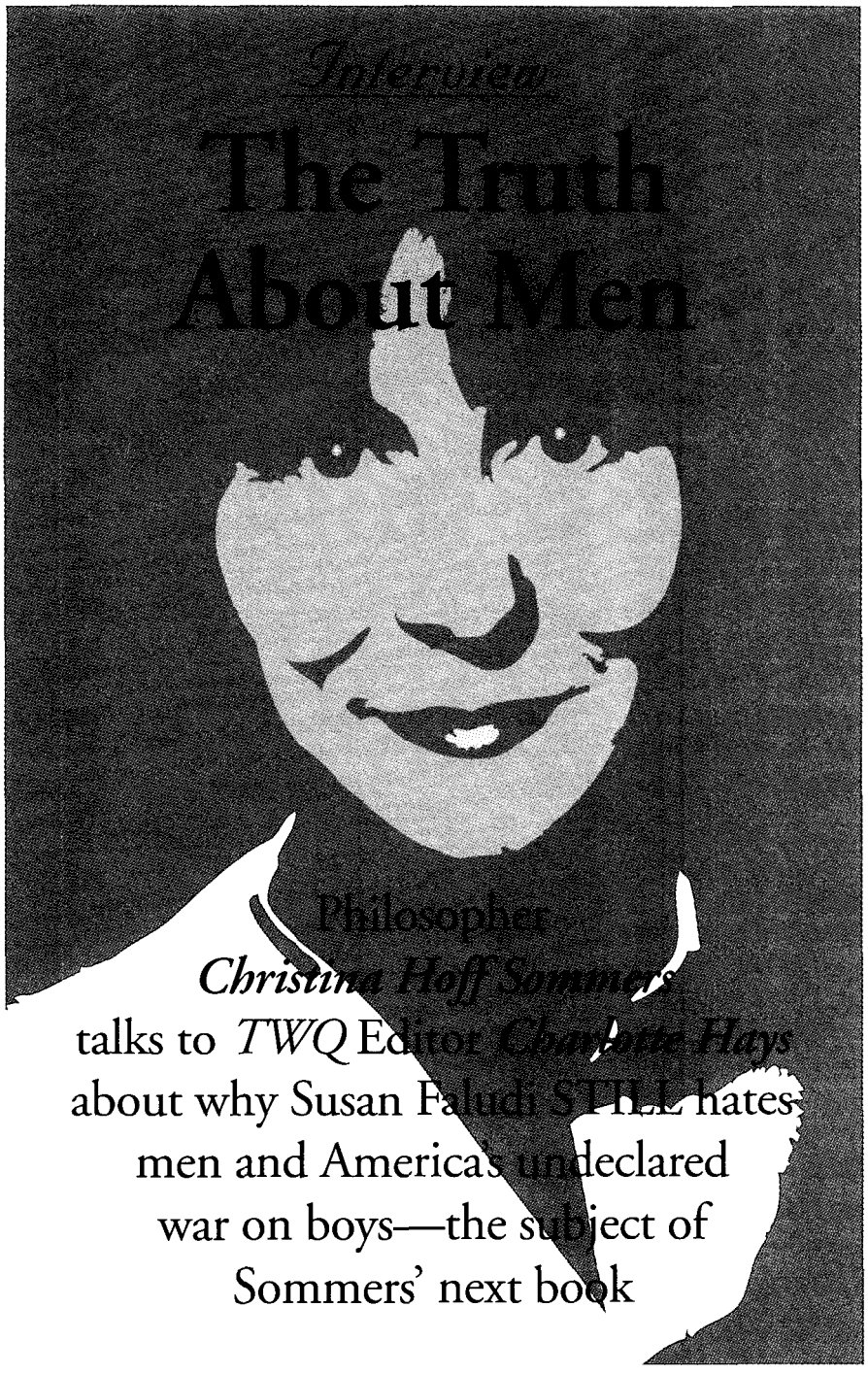

Interview

The Truth About Men

Philosopher *Christina Hoff Sommers* talks to *TWQ* Editor *Charlotte Hays* about why Susan Faludi STILL hates men and America's undeclared war on boys—the subject of Sommers' next book

TWQ: Let's start with much lauded author Susan Faludi. Faludi became a feminist icon seven years ago with the publication of *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women.* Now she's back with her newest offering, *Stiffed: The Betrayal of the American Man.* The famous feminist now says men have been cheated, that there is a "masculinity crisis." What are Faludi's thoughts on the masculinity crisis? Is it real?

SOMMERS: She believes that American men are victims of the patriarchy. Just as women are oppressed, so too are men. Men, she claims, are captive to a system that imposes on them outmoded and unrealizable standards of manhood. Because of their confusion over the male role, men are suffering a psychological crisis. She describes them as being "in agony." Speaking of the decimated lives of boomer males, she says it is as if a generation of men had stood by to watch a rocket carrying all of their hopes and dreams explode on the launch pad. So it's a very dark and melodramatic picture of where men are.

But I can't find any documentation for her thesis. If men are experiencing the agonies Faludi speaks of, they are doing so with remarkable equanimity. I recently attended a lecture she gave at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C. During the question-and-answer period, I asked her if she could cite a single piece of significant research that showed men are in crisis. She said (and I paraphrase), "Oh, it's been documented many times." But she could not mention a single article. She referred vaguely to the scientific literature on depression, anxiety, and suicide.

In fact, that literature shows little or no significant change in men's mental health over the past decades. Suicide has gone down slightly among middle-aged men. As for other disorders, the statistics remain fairly constant. A small percentage of men *are* depressed and anxious. But 3 to 4 percent is the highest I've ever seen for depression among men, and there appears to be no increase.

The National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago, which has been tracking levels of general happiness and life satisfaction in the general population since 1957, consistently finds that approximately 89 percent of Americans describe themselves as happy with their lives with no significant differences between men and women. I recently asked its survey director, Tom Smith, if there were any unusual signs of distress

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among men in the last few decades (the years Faludi claims their hopes and dreams exploded before their eyes). The very professional Mr. Smith replied, "There have been no trends in a negative direction during those years."

TWQ: What does Faludi make of the World War II generation, the fathers of the baby boomers she believes to have been stiffed?

SOMMERS: She is confused. On the one hand, she seems to admire the World War II generation for their heroism, loyalty, and self-sacrifice. But then, oddly, she says that the fathers of the baby boomers are the ones who betrayed them by giving them "dangerous" notions of masculinity. And she never really explains what she has in mind when she suggests today's men need new versions of manhood. She's wise to avoid the subject, because as soon as feminists start describing new concepts of manhood they usually end up describing women.

TWQ: So she doesn't tell us where things, in her opinion, went wrong?

SOMMERS: No, she just laments a general loss of innocence and the loss of happiness in men. Again, one would expect that if she had identified something genuine, it would have been noticed by conventional social science. It has not. It is, of course, possible for a perceptive amateur observer to see something not yet understood by social science. But Faludi is not that observer. Her commentaries are implausible to the point of being absurd.

Consider her remarks about how men are in thrall to the "ornamental culture." Academic feminists often argue that the culture dehumanizes women by treating them as ornamental objects. Faludi says that contemporary culture is now doing that to men—treating them as objects and "images" rather than as persons. Men, she says, now suffer because of an "enslavement to glamour." How true is that? Can anyone go into a bar or a ball park and come away with the impression that men are slaves to glamour?

TWQ: Why has this book had such a fantastic reception?

SOMMERS: It's getting a tremendous amount of publicity because there is a kind of old-girl network among reporters. Feminist journalists think she's important. They think she's a careful thinker. The cover of *Newsweek*? *Newsweek* is supposed to be about news. And news is supposed to bear some relation to truth. It was just wrong for *Newsweek* to print this factually challenged polemic.

TWQ: Well, as you know, Faludi is a contributing editor of *Newsweek*, and I want to read a quote from a story she wrote for *Newsweek* shortly before *Stiffed* came out. The headline was "Rage of the American Male," and it was about Mark Barton, the day trader who went on a murderous rampage in Atlanta, Georgia, and the thirty-four-year-old Alabama man who killed three people at his job. Here's what she wrote: "We can't quell the suspicion that their crimes reveal something meaningful about our society, about us. Particularly, since the shooter is always the same sex, we wonder: What does it mean about the struggles of American men?"

SOMMERS: It's an old trick favored by bigots. You take the worst case example from a group and then say that it reveals the truth about the whole. A racist will take someone like O.J. Simpson as representative of African-Americans. A male basher will take Mark Barton. But even among mass murderers, Barton was at the extreme. The man bludgeoned his own children to death before he went on his shooting spree. This is not a normal man. This is not a representative man. For Faludi to suggest that Barton should prompt us to contemplate the struggle of the American male is outrageous. It is like suggesting we take Susan Smith (who made headlines in 1994 when she drowned her two sons by pushing her car into a lake) as a metaphor for the struggle of the American mother.

Where men are concerned, it is now a normal and accepted practice to generalize from criminal extremes. The killings at Littleton provoked any number of articles on the "rage" of the American boy. But there were all sorts of young men at Columbine High that day. Some behaved heroically. Why don't they inspire disquisitions on the inner nature of the American boy?

Anyone who thinks that *Stiffed* is male-friendly is badly mistaken. It is true that the new book is less rancorous than *Backlash*, but the price for men is still high. Instead of presenting men as oppressors, she presents them as pitiable.

TWQ: It's interesting that the article on the rage of males with these bizarre conclusions appeared in *Newsweek* magazine—you can't get much more mainstream than that.

SOMMERS: Right. But apocalyptic alarms about looming disasters in the population sell well. Books and magazine articles that identify large groups of Americans as psychologically infirm are immensely popular. It didn't begin with Faludi. First it was women who were identified as a victim class—unhappy, unfulfilled, desperate. Next it was girls. Mary Pipher's *Reviving Ophelia* describes American girls as "crashing and burning." Harvard's Carol Gilligan has them "drowning

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and disappearing in a sea of western culture." Not to be outdone, psychologist William Pollack soon followed with *Real Boys: Rescuing Our Sons from the Myths of Boyhood*, claiming that boys too are in crisis. He refers to boys as "young Hamlets who succumb to an inner state of Denmark." If these authors are right, the entire nation is going to hell in a handbasket.

Perhaps this fashion in literary victimology will soon wane—it has nothing left to feed on. With women girls, boys, and, now, men all identified as stricken populations, the genre seems to have run out of victims.

TWQ: One of the things that I found interesting is that Faludi embarked upon her research for *Stiffed* by attending meetings of men who had battered women. I think she even went to the meeting that O. J. Simpson was at one time ordered to attend (but found a way to get out of going). What do you make of this?

SOMMERS: She went looking for trouble and she found it. Obviously men who were in therapy for battering their wives are not the healthiest subjects. She also interviewed men who act in pornography films. She spent time with the Spur Posse, a gang of teen sex predators. How did she miss the Menendez brothers?

TWQ: Did she interview any perfectly normal men?

SOMMERS: No. Or, if she did, she made them seem strange. Take the Promise Keepers. During her recent media tour, journalists asked her for evidence that men are miserable. She often replied that men did not gather together for the Million Man March or for Promise Keepers conventions because of strong feelings of well-being. Well, I happened to be in Washington, D.C., when the Promise Keepers were in town for a rally. Most of the men I saw were quite cheerful. Faludi takes the Promise Keepers as a measure of disorder in society or of psychological misery among men. But there was a festive mood at the rally, and a lot of men who'd come to the gathering were having a good time. They would be very surprised to be described as depressed, betrayed, or mentally fragile. I suspect the same was true of most of the men who attended the Million Man March (although the mental stability of the gentleman who organized that event is questionable).

By the way, it's at feminist gatherings that you find true agony. I have never seen more disgruntled, unhappy people than those I encountered at the annual meetings of the National Women's Studies Association. The women were bitter, chronically offended, and full of resentment. My friend, psychiatrist Sally Satel, got a similar impression at a NOW conference she attended last year.

TWQ: It's impossible to discuss *Stiffed* without talking about Susan Faludi's fisherman. Faludi interviewed a fisherman who said, "If you want to know what's happening in a stream called our society, go to the edges and look at what's happening there, and then you begin to have an understanding... of what's going on in the middle."

SOMMERS: Faludi would have us believe that the fringe elements tell us about the mainstream. In fact, social science operates on the opposite premise: anecdotes (especially from the edges) are regarded as misleading, unless backed by some conventional studies using data with proper controls. Faludi's six years of "researching" seem not to have included going to libraries to look at the formal studies on how men are faring in American society. She needs more than the assurance of an unnamed fisherman to justify her research techniques. And *Newsweek* should have required more than a fisherman's assurance that her methodology was sound.

TWQ: You are writing a book called *The War on Boys*, which is scheduled to come out this summer. What is the war on boys? And where is it waged?

SOMMERS: There have always been societies that favored boys over girls. Ours may be the first to deliberately throw the gender switch by preferring girls. Little boys are politically incorrect. It begins in elementary schools, which are increasingly female-friendly domains—boys are there on sufferance. Just to give one example: Boys, far more than girls, enjoy rough-and-tumble play. And that means running, chasing, fleeing, playful fighting, and wrestling. It's a very positive behavior, it is a critical part of boys' healthy development. And it is very different from aggression. In rough-and-tumble play, the children enjoy themselves, there is a lot of laughing, and the participants part as friends. In aggression, there is no laughter, children are often hurt, and they part as enemies.

Increasingly, parents and teachers are failing to make the distinction. The failure of parents and teachers to respect and understand the distinction poses a serious threat to boys' welfare and normal development. Teachers have always rightly prohibited rowdiness in their classrooms, but they made proper allowances for it on the playground. That is changing. Today, many educators regard the normal play of little boys with disapproval and some ban it outright.

Recess—the one time during the school day that boys can legitimately engage in rowdy play—is now under siege and may soon be a thing of the past. In 1998, Atlanta eliminated

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recess in all its public elementary schools. In Philadelphia, school officials have replaced traditional recess with "socialized recess" in which the children are assigned structured activities and carefully monitored.

TWQ: What do they do?

SOMMERS: They do organized activities. The move to eliminate recess has aroused little notice and even less opposition. It is surely not a deliberate effort to thwart the desires of schoolboys. Just the same it betrays a shocking indifference to boys' natural proclivities, play preferences, and elemental needs. Girls benefit from recess—but boys absolutely need it. This is just one example of boy-averse attitudes and policies.

Another is that many teachers are now insisting that boys and girls "integrate," as they call it. They must play together and sit together. Often, they don't want to. The girls don't want it, and the boys especially don't want it. Between kindergarten and sixth grade, the children prefer same-sex play. (They discover each other again in junior high at which time they are all too happy to "integrate.")

In researching my book, I found schools throughout the country forcing boys to play with girls, and to play like girls. School officials have young boys playing with dolls, quilting, playing female roles in non-sexist fairy tales. The boys are not cooperating, I am happy to say, but why subject them to such treatment? We cannot allow our schools to become places where typical male behavior is viewed as some kind of disorder.

TWQ: Can you tell me just a little bit more about how the war against little boys is waged? Is it mostly in schools?

SOMMERS: Yes. Which is where children spend a good deal of their time. But some of the problem is in the home. Mothers too may be growing less tolerant of the antics of sons. This may explain the rapid rise in the number of boys diagnosed with attention-deficit disorder. One school administrator from Michigan told me of calls and visits from mothers worried because they have "an immature four-year-old boy." Their sons seem to be less cooperative than girls the same age. They have more trouble sitting still, have shorter attention spans, and are on the whole less tractable. What should be done? She tells the parents not to worry: Their boys are fine. But she worries about a growing intolerance for boys.

Faludi interviewed men who act in porn films. She spent time with the Spur Posse, a gang of teen sex predators. How did she miss the Menendez Brothers?

TWQ: Other than the abolition of recess, what are some other ways the war is waged on boys?

SOMMERS: Part of it is, as I said, just ignoring their needs. For example, if we were as concerned about the well-being of boys as we are girls, we would find a way to address the reading gap. Boys are seriously behind girls in mastering this critical skill. One Department of Education publication reports that boys are one-and-a-half years behind girls in reading.

The gap in writing is even more dramatic. Feminists have put pressure on schools and publishers to make educational materials girl-friendly. They may have gone too far. One reading expert, commenting on a sample of elementary school readers, noted that students may come away thinking the West was settled by teenage girls traveling with their parents.

Another way the war is waged is by applying sexual harassment laws to young boys. Harassment laws are confusing to adults. Imagine applying them to kindergartners and first graders! Children need guidance and discipline, they do not need divisive gender politics. The problem is going to get worse because of a recent Supreme Court decision that makes schools legally vulnerable if they don't take action against what feminists regard as the sexist behavior of little children.

TWQ: Does a little boy even know he is sexually harassing a young girl when they are in elementary school?

SOMMERS: I don't think so. I don't deny that young boys act out in unacceptable ways. When they do they need to be corrected. But the girls also behave badly. It's not just boys against the girls. It's kids. The best research that I've seen on school harassment shows that both boys and girls engage in harassing conduct. Schools have a right and a responsibility to prohibit it and to impose a clear code of discipline. That is the *continued on page 30*

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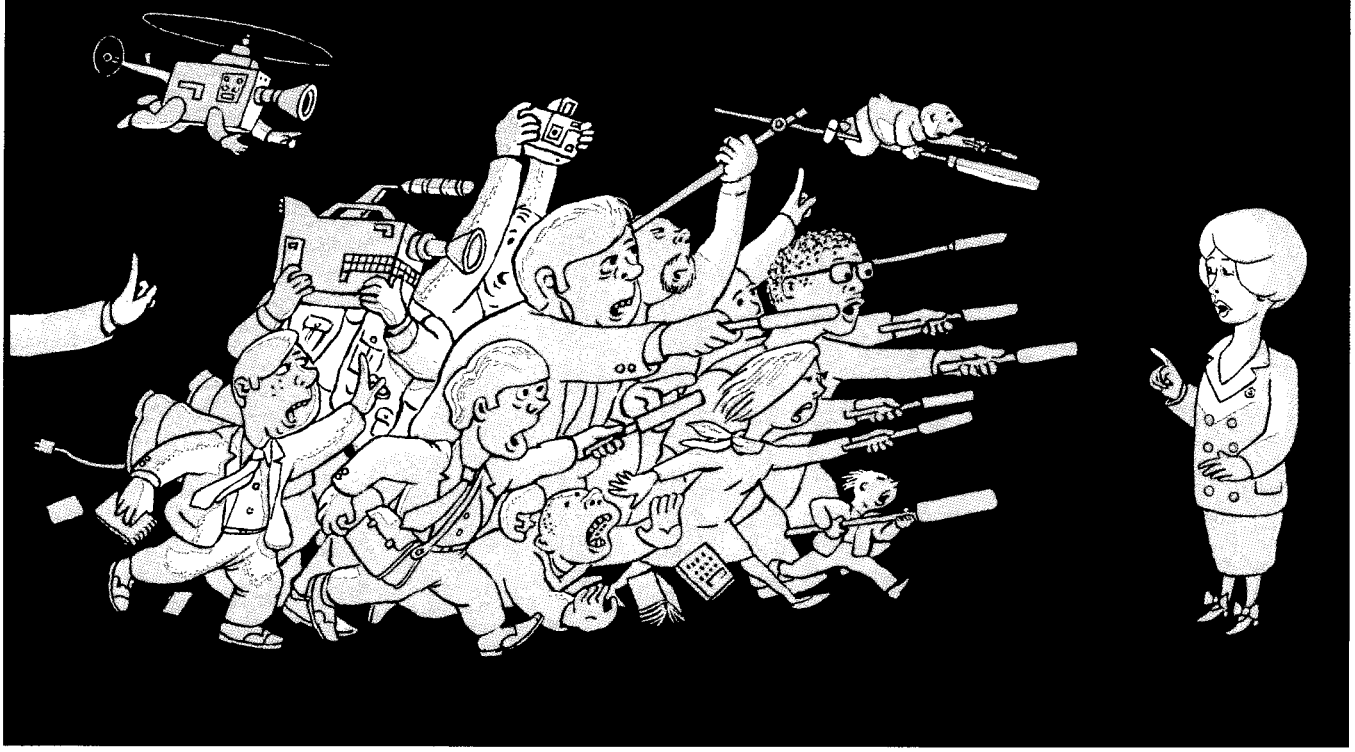
Memo to the Next First Lady

by *Peggy Noonan*



LET ME TELL you what we want from the next first lady. We want her to be normal. We'd really like a normal human being to be the next first lady. We haven't had this since Barbara Bush left. Remember what she did her first week in the White House? She sat down with reporters and said, essentially, "Hello everyone. I love my husband and my kids, and they're my priority and always have been. I wear fake pearls. I'm not glamorous. I've got a cause and it's literacy. I want to encourage parents to read to their kids and take a greater part in their lives. So that's me. Any problems with that?" And you know, there weren't. And she was allowed to be her normal self.

So I think the next first lady should keep in mind the words of Warren G. Harding. Harding was known for a number of odd and unusual things, but he summed up the meaning of his 1920 presidential candidacy with some good clear words: "A return to normalcy." He meant normality, but never mind. What he was trying to communicate was that after all the *sturm* and *drang* of the Wilson era—the world war and furious domestic battles—he wanted to right the ship again and get it sailing smoothly. That's what the people wanted, too. He won in a landslide.

What, in this context, is a return to normalcy? It's something easy and something hard. The easy part is what you will not be doing. One assumes you will not attempt to seize for yourself an extra-constitutional role as co-president; your husband will presumably not be braying about "two for the price of one," and you will not attempt to nationalize 17 percent of the American economy. This is all to the good! We don't want you to do these things. Someone tried and it ended badly.

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The hard part will be that just by not doing these things you will face a challenge from some influential sectors. Certain members of the media, the academe, the opinion makers and *Hardball* jockeys will be lying in wait, ready to paint you as A Step Backwards, A Throwback. And they will be harder on a Republican first lady than a Democratic first lady. If it is Mrs. Bradley, who is a writer and intellectual, they will use phrases like "behind-the-scene-advisor"; they will quote Bradley aides as saying, "She has a huge impact on his thinking, she's been his number one advisor for twenty years." This will be okay, and Mrs. Bradley will be able to relax and be a writer, though not of diaries, which are often subpoenaed. (Actually, Mrs. Bradley's big challenge will be to prove that even though she's an intellectual she knows how to entertain. A lot of people will expect her to be like Diana Trilling—"Here is a cracker. Jacques Derrida was a catastrophe." It will be fun to see how this goes.)

If it's Mrs. Gore, who everyone says is a nice woman, she'll be allowed to be pretty much herself. Actually she really does seem normal, so just showing up and walking down Main Street after the circus leaves town she'll be a relief. (Tipper: Don't let Al hire all these hard-eyed, thin-souled little spinners we've all gotten used to. When they come to you for a job say, "I'm so sorry but we actually don't have a war room. Why don't you just put 'Gore White House' on your resumé and go straight to *Good Morning America*, and we won't tell, and good luck to ya.")

But if it's a Republican first lady—oh dear.

Bob Dole would have been so hilarious as first gentleman, so entertaining, that everyone would have liked it a lot and it would have been months, well, weeks, before we fully tired of the newest wave of Viagra jokes. But in time things might have become complicated, not because he's a man but because he was majority leader of the U.S. Senate. He might have found it hard to understand that he was not expected to go to Oval Office meetings with members of Congress. He would have found it hard to plan things like menus. ("Aaarrrgghh, give 'em some Velveeta.") He would have had to memorize as his mantra, "I'm retired." With his midwestern accent it would have sounded like he was saying, "I'm a retard," but in time it would have broken through for him, and us: She is the president.

But if it's a Republican first lady, well, she may have a really hard time of it at first. We can expect the return of the phrase "adoring gaze." And "poster girl for the past." And *Washington Post* "Style" section pieces in which women are surveyed: "Do you feel women have taken a step backward?" "Yes, I guess the Oval Office has a glass ceiling too." A Republican first lady will face a press corps wary of women who garden, and addicted to covering dysfunction. There's no way around this but there are some ways through it. First, all of the women who are married to the Republican men running for president are, in different ways and to varying degrees, women of worldly accomplishment. And they should just be themselves and continue to accomplish. And if the media complain, they could keep in mind the serene words of Mrs. Eugene McCarthy, who, when her husband was running for president, explained herself this way: "I am myself, I am my age." It was so elegant in its self-acceptance. No one bothered her a lot after that.

You might point out that you are taking your inspiration in your new role from the best first lady of the modern era. Yes, Denis Thatcher. Denis Thatcher was a wonderful first spouse. He loved Margaret and supported her; he was always the first one to say "hear hear" when she spoke, and to lead the standing ovation. He was patient, and he sacrificed. But he didn't lose sight of who he was, didn't sacrifice his individualism. He had strong opinions and shared them, usually privately. He didn't seem to care too much what the press said about him. He did his job. I don't think there would have been a her without a him. The next first lady should call him up and ask him over for tea and get his advice.

So those are some early thoughts. Don't do Republican-type things and buy new furniture and china and make the White House look better right away. It's really okay the way it is, even the red velvet Victorian bordello kind of room the Clintons had done upstairs. It's history, and it captures their unique leadership style. Don't let campaign donors stay in the Lincoln bedroom, and don't let anyone jump up and down on the bed. And don't, no matter what he does, explain that his mother and grandmother fought over him.

By the way, someone will ask what you'll do if he cheats on you. You might smile pleasantly and say that thing they say in Texas: "Then he'll be looking upwards from the kitchen floor and the last words he'll hear will be 'How do I reload this thing?' "◆

Peggy Noonan is a former Reagan speechwriter and author of What I Saw at the Revolution. *This is from a book in progress to be published this Spring.*

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FIRST LADIES~IN~WAITING

TWQ's fanciful tour of the next White House

Annette Bening

WHAT WE KNOW:

Resumé: Prepared for the job by playing the president's girlfriend in *The American President* and is married to on-again, off-again presidential aspirant Warren Beatty

Greatest Triumph: Teaming up with Denzel Washington to save civilization in *The Siege*

Most Embarrassing Relative: Warren's sister Shirley MacLaine and her assorted past lives—you never know *which* Shirley is coming to the White House.

How She Met Her Husband: Took a meeting with Beatty at an Italian restaurant to discuss their upcoming roles in *Bugsy*—tied the knot in a secret ceremony a scant two months after their first child, Kathlyn, was born

Children: Kathlyn, Ben, Isabel, and expecting a fourth

Background: Born in Topeka in 1958 and grew up in San Diego; mother a church singer and father an insurance agent

Hillary Factor: Well, she *did* marry a notorious womanizer, didn't she?

Un-Hillary Factor: Great gams. Forget the pantsuits—nobody's going to make fun of this first lady's legs.

Does She Bake Cookies?: In *American Beauty* she not only prepared a picture-perfect family meal that Kevin Spacey threw against the wall, but she also pruned her roses wearing color-coordinated outfits.

WHAT WE'RE IN FOR:

Shameless Inaugural Gesture: Forces reluctant Secret Service agents to wave People for the American Way banners proclaiming that the world is now safe from Republicans

First Guests in the Lincoln Bedroom: Alec Baldwin and Kim Basinger, who enjoy an intense session of high-level policy planning

Banned from the White House: Any American citizen who owns a firearm —especially Charlton Heston

First White House Makeover: Memo to self: White House needs higher production values. Bring in set designers from *Bulworth* to make the Oval Office look more presidential. Convert Blue Room to channeling space for Shirley. ✿

Ernestine Bradley

WHAT WE KNOW:

Resumé: Professor of comparative and German literature at Montclair State University; author of *The Language of Silence: West German Literature and the Holocaust*; two books on the works of Austrian philosopher/novelist Hermann Broch; co-editor of *Legacies and Ambiguities: Postwar Fiction and Culture in West Germany and Japan*; co-author of several university textbooks

Most Embarrassing Relative: Luftwaffe Dad

How She Met Her Husband: Working for a film company in New York and assigned to interview brainy Knicks heartthrob Bill Bradley about the poet Marianne Moore—though conversant with Moore, Ernestine had never heard of Bradley

Children: Theresa Anne Bradley, 20, who lived in Washington with her father much of the time; and a daughter by her first marriage

Background: Born Ernestine Misselbeck in Passau, Germany, in 1935. Came to U.S. as a Pan Am flight attendant in 1957

Education: A doctorate from Emory University

Hillary Factor: She married a Rhodes scholar named Bill, translated Kate Millet's *Sexual Politics* into German, and went by the name of Ernestine Schlant

Art by Charles Jaffé

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until the campaign. Wonder why?

Hillary Denial: "I wouldn't like it if someone came into my classroom and started teaching just because he knew how to read. I don't want to go out and pretend I'm a political expert on issues. I'm not an expert on health care. I'm not an expert on China."

Does She Bake Cookies?: Maybe some half-baked ideas but no cookies—the *New York Times* opined that Ernestine may "outdo the first lady at not baking cookies."

WHAT WE'RE IN FOR:

Shameless Inaugural Gesture: Skips it to attend conference on Germanic languages instead

First Guest in the Lincoln Bedroom: Dennis Rodman, who is surprised he has to attend an evening lecture on some guy named "Goethy"

First White House Makeover: Announces that she wants to be called Dr. Schlant-Rodham; develops an unexpected passion for overhauling the health care system

Laura Bush

WHAT WE KNOW:

Resumé: A former public school librarian, Laura like her famous mother-in-law has made literacy her cause—perfect for tutoring George on the names of itty bitty countries.

How She Met Her Husband: Reluctantly. Laura turned down a chance to meet him in 1975 because she thought he was too political. They were introduced two years later at a barbecue and were married within three months. You don't waste time when you've just met the alpha male of Texas.

Children: Seventeen-year-old twins Barbara and Jenna, who are students at a public high school in Austin

Pets: A spaniel named Scottie, progeny of Barbara Bush's beloved Millie. But did Scottie inherit Millie's writing genes?

Background: Born Laura Welch of Midland, Texas. Her father Harold was a well-to-do homebuilder; mother Jenna kept the books. Laura attended the same junior high as George W. before he left for prep school.

Education: B.A. in education, Southern Methodist University; master's degree in library science, University of Texas

Hillary Factor: Married a rake and rambling boy

Un-Hillary Factor: Doesn't blame George W.'s youthful indiscretions on Barbara Bush

Does She Bake Cookies?: Yes—and only she knows for sure whether W. inhaled.

WHAT WE'RE IN FOR:

Shameless Inaugural Gesture: Absolutely insists that the entire Bush clan —George, Bar, Jeb, Neil, Marvin, and Doro—huddle together to hold the family Bible for George W.'s swearing in—teamwork counts!

Banned from the White House: Most of Hollywood

First Guests in the Lincoln Bedroom: After fumigation—Barbara and Poppy, who do a giddy victory dance, but not on Abe's bed

First White House Makeover: Smokers welcome: Spittoons are placed in all major corridors. Laura mysteriously takes to wearing three strands of fake pearls. Suddenly, her hair goes white. Media furor ensues, but Laura insists it's natural.

Tipper Gore

WHAT WE KNOW:

Resumé: Former drummer in an all-girl band known as the Wildcats, part-time photographer at the *Tennessean* in Nashville, author of *Picture This*, a collection of her photos, and now bubbly and hip after doing an abrupt about-face on her crusade against dirty lyrics in rock music

Defining Moment: Bragging about her alpha male's sexiness on TV. "I tell you, he isn't wearing anything when we go to bed," she confided to the waiting world.

Most Embarrassing Moment: Reading a *New York Post* story that said she'd had a facelift, which her spokesman vehemently denies

Most Embarrassing Relative: Daughter Karenna's mother-in-law Lisa Schiff, a cutting-edge record entrepreneur, whose record company is known for dirty lyrics and such "artists" as"Ruff Ride" rapper Fraze

How She Met Her Husband: When

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upper crust meets upper crust, it's often love at first sight. Tipper first espied "Prince Albert" at a senior dance held at St. Alban's, his upscale Washington prep school, in 1965; they wed in 1970 at the National Cathedral, exiting to the Beatles' "All You Need Is Love."

Background: Born Mary Elizabeth Aitcheson in suburban Virginia; only child; parents divorced when she was four; grew up in the household of her maternal grandparents

Lady Bird Factor: Cloying nickname allegedly based on her early fondness for the lullaby "Tippy Tippy Tin"

Education: St. Agnes, an elite Episcopal girls' school in Alexandria, Va.; followed Harvard-bound Al to Boston, first attending Garland Junior College and then Boston University, where she earned her bachelor's degree; master's in psychology from George Peabody College in Nashville

Children: A batch of preppies—Karenna, Kristin, Sarah, and Albert III

Hillary Factor: What about the *Time* magazine report that she was the "secret mastermind" who persuaded Gore to tap "genuinely scandalous" Tony Coelho for the campaign? But Al, how much were you paying Naomi Wolf??

Hillary Denial: "With four children and aging parents, I find that I only spend so much time on issues that I care about."

Does She Bake Cookies?: Oh, please. She's shared her recipe for "Tennessee Treats" with half of Carthage.

WHAT WE'RE IN FOR:

Shameless Inaugural Gesture: Tipper is *finally* able to snub Hillary—at the inaugural lunch, she's seated with Al's third cousins from Possum Hollow.

First Guests in the Lincoln Bedroom: Buddhist nuns—out of their habits

Banned from the White House: Buddhist nuns—in their habits

First White House Makeover: Plaques reading "Invented by Al Gore" placed on all PCs; Annie Leibovitz' photo of dirt farmer Al supplants Gilbert Stuart's George W.; copies of *Love Story* presented to visiting dignitaries

First White House Concert: The Monkees playing "All You Need Is Love" with Tipper on the drums and Al playing the tambourine ✿

Shelley Buchanan

WHAT WE KNOW:

Resumé: Famous for being White House receptionist and assistant to fabled Nixon secretary Rose Mary Woods. Now she is vice president of Patrick J. Buchanan Enterprises.

Defining Moment: Standing by Patrick's side hour after hour in high-heeled shoes. Author Florence King once noted that "every woman who has worn high heels can interpret the look on Shelley Buchanan's face." King opined that Pat and his politico sister Bay "deserve to spend ten thousand years in Purgatory massaging Shelley's feet, except that would require Shelley to be in Purgatory with them."

Most Embarrassing Moment: During the 1992 campaign when somebody asked her if she preferred Mrs. or Ms., Shelley quietly replied, "Ms." Word has it that Pat hasn't let her speak in public since.

How She Met Her Husband: During Nixon's 1968 campaign when he was a speechwriter. They married in 1971.

Background: An heiress from Grosse Pointe, Michigan

Education: University of Michigan political science major

Hillary Factor: It's not Shelley. But keep an eye on Pat's in-your-face sister Bay, who reportedly once remarked, "The stationery is already printed, and if you aren't going to run, I am."

Hillary Denial: Pat doesn't give her a chance to reply—but he likes to tell the crowds that he's not putting his wife in charge of health care reform.

Does She Bake Cookies?: Who knows? The Buchanans rarely eat at home; pitchfork Pat and Shelley are often spotted at Washington's posh Jockey Club, Nancy Reagan's old hang-out.

WHAT WE'RE IN FOR:

Shameless Inaugural Gesture: Over Shelley's objections, Patrick insists that Bill Clinton be arrested and read his Miranda rights on the spot.

Banned From the White House: After-dinner *horas*

First Makeover: Shelley returns to her old job as receptionist in the West Wing. But first she sets up a boxing ring outside the Oval Office so that Patrick can settle disputes with visiting Democratic congressmen the manly way. The Enemies List is proudly posted on the White House website. ✿

Compiled by Charlotte Hays, Grace Paine Terzian, Ivy McClure Stewart, and Amanda Butler.

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Cindy McCain

WHAT WE KNOW:

Resumé: A former cheerleader, Cindy taught high school before becoming vice chairman of her family business, one of the largest Anheuser-Busch distributors in the country.

Greatest Triumph: Her good deeds are described in the book *Chicken Soup for the Woman's Soul.* They include going to Bangladesh to help sick children and bringing a little girl home for adoption.

Most Embarrassing Moment: She was caught by the DEA after several years of stealing painkillers from a medical charity she helped run. She subsequently entered rehab in 1992 and says she's been clean since.

How She Met Her Husband: Vacationing in Hawaii—they both lied about their ages; he was a 43-year-old war hero and she was 23; their whirlwind courtship was somewhat slowed by his need to finalize his divorce from his first wife.

Children: Meghan, Jack, Jimmy and Bridgit

Education: Master's degree in special education from the University of Southern California

Background: Arizona heiress

Hillary Factor: Some heartless souls in the media have criticized her for not being punished for her transgressions—for drugs, not land deals.

Hillary Denial: "We understand what it is to serve, and we won't ever do anything to embarrass the United States."

Does She Bake Cookies?: Not only bakes them but no doubt would hand them out personally to TB patients with raging contagion.

WHAT WE'RE IN FOR:

Shameless Inaugural Gesture: Is proud that she still can fit into her cheerleading costume and lets the world know by wearing it to the inauguration

Banned from the White House: The president would blow his stack if any reporter from the *Arizona Republic*—which revealed his bad temper—stopped by.

First White House Makeover: Eliminates the kitchenette off the Oval Office so that cameras can see everything that goes on

Sabina Forbes

WHAT WE KNOW:

Resumé: Makes Barbara Bush look like *Baywatch.* She has never had a paying job but does much of the cooking and cleaning at the family estate in New Jersey.

Happiest When: Driving the tractor and birthing cows, which she raises as a hobby

Most Embarrassing Relative: *Not* bon vivant father-in-law, the late Malcolm Forbes! It's Sabina herself—because she's such an aristocrat.

How She Met Her Husband: This is a lady who knows what to do with a cigar. When the boy sitting next to her at a debutante party at New York's Colony Club offered her one, she smoked it. Five weeks later, she and the boy—Steve Forbes—were engaged.

Education: Grew up in Paris and Rome, studied art history at Finch College

Background: *Née* Beekman, she is a member of the family that founded the Social Register and the daughter of an Episcopal minister who toiled in fancy churches in Paris and Rome.

Children: Five daughters—Roberta, Sabina, Catherine, Moira, and Elizabeth

Pets: Whiskey (poodle), Daisy (mutt), Sunny (bird), a ten-year-old frog—and, of course, all those cows

Hillary Factor: Does a blue-blooded graduate of Finch College possibly have anything in common with a blue-stockinged Hillary Clinton?

Does She Bake Cookies: Yes, but she's more famous for her macaroni and cheese.

WHAT WE'RE IN FOR:

Shameless Inaugural Gesture: Instead of walking down Pennsylvania Avenue, the first couple rides Malcolm Forbes' old motorcycle.

Banned from the White House: Make-up artists and interior decorators

First Guest in the Lincoln Bedroom: Bessie, Sabina's favorite bovine friend from home—plenty of hay

First Makeover: Craftsmen are called in to stress upholstery and furniture to make everything look shabby genteel—just like at home in New Jersey.

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Hip Hildy

Her chants sell like hotcakes. She's an honorary anorexic. *Charlotte Allen* looks for the *real* Hildegard of Bingen and finds one tough sister

It's time for us to take back Hildegard of Bingen. Make that Saint Hildegard of Bingen. For too long, the medieval German abbess, composer, and mystical poet Hildegard (1098-1179) has been dragooned, like a crucifix at a santeria rite, into the role of cult figure for every half-baked notion of our time. The poor prioress must be turning over in her crypt. Her best-known religious work, *Scivias* (*Know the Ways*), elaborated on Divine Wisdom, personified as a female figure in the Book of Proverbs and other Scriptures—so Hildegard's admirers have cast her as a Goddess Sophia worshipper just like some of today's feminist theologians. She was never officially canonized (although every pope from John XII in the fourteenth century has called her a saint)—so she *must* have been a rebel against a woman-stifling patriarchal official church.

Elsewhere, Hildegard has been turned into a holistic-health nut because she happened to write a medical treatise. She has also been turned into a lesbian, presiding along with her twelfth-century abbot contemporary, St. Aelred of Rievaulx, over the Saint Aelred and Saint Hildegard Society, the gay ministry at the Episcopal Church of the Messiah in Santa Ana, California. Aelred was tapped for this dubious honor because he wrote a treatise on "spiritual friendship," while Hildegard had a "spiritual friend," a nun named Richardis who helped transcribe *Scivias*, then died soon after being appointed abbess of her own convent in northern Germany. The gay Episcopalians seem not to have read any of Hildegard's actual writings on the subject of homosexual activity, which are refreshingly politically incorrect. In *Scivias* she castigated men who "change their manly strength into the contrary weakness" and declared that "a woman who...simulates intercourse, taking the part of the man, with another woman, appears most vile in my sight."

In the most outrageous blow of all, Hildegard, who along with other medieval ascetics practiced self-mortification, has been turned into an honorary anorexia victim. In a metaphor-torturing article in the *New York Times Magazine* last May, writer Jennifer Egan theorized that since self-denial and suffering are obviously the only route to power for a woman in a male-dominated society, Hildegard (together with other famous female mystics such as St. Catherine of Siena) was an early avatar of the self-starving, self-mutilating Princess Diana—and also of Hillary Clinton, who while by no means anorexic, can certainly be said to have suffered at the hands of Bill. One wonders what's next in store for Hildegard in the trendy revisionism department: Bi-polar depression? *Fen shui*? The Dr. Atkins diet?

A feminist scholarly industry has grown up around Hildegard, typically

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speculating that her visions were the product of migraine headaches. Taking the cake in this category is an essay by Sara Maitland and Wendy Mulford in their 1998 book *Virtuous Magic: Women Saints and their Meanings*, which includes a most un-medieval vision—attributed to Hildegard by Maitland and Mulford but not documented in any of Hildegard's writings—of a bare-bellied Sophia shimmying across the sky with a diamond stuck in her navel. Maitland and Mulford speculate that the church refused to canonize Hildegard because she did not believe in sin, a healthy antidote, in their opinion, to "what excessive guilt has done to women." Like the Episcopalians of Santa Ana, they would do well to read what Hildegard herself had to say on the subject.

Scivias contains a detailed vision of Hell and long catalogues of—guess what—sins: fornication, adultery, simony, heresy, insubordination, and the like. Furthermore, Hildegard's aim was to make the perpetrators of these crimes, male and female, feel more, not less, guilty about having committed them. "They wallow in filth like a babe in a pigsty," she scolded the lax-living clergy of her day. Even a well-intentioned writer such as Joan Ohanneson, author of a 1997 novel about Hildegard called *Scarlet Music*, could not resist turning her tale into a melodramatic wimple-buster complete with lascivious bishop and pregnant nuns, and her convent into a twelfth-century battered women's shelter for maidens in flight from *droit du seigneur*. The real Hildegard would have scoffed at such insipid victimology. She was one tough sister, as it were.

Born to a noble family in Bermersheim about twenty miles from Mainz in southwestern Germany, she was a sickly child, so her parents parked her in a nearby Benedictine convent at Disbodenberg at the age of eight, following the custom of well-to-do medievals with daughters deemed poor marriage prospects. The abbess, Jutta, another mystic later beatified by the church and a onetime famous beauty, took Hildegard under her wing and raised her like a daughter, teaching her to read Latin, the language of learning.

When Jutta died in 1136, the nuns of Disbodenberg elected Hildegard to succeed her as prioress. She had been having visions since her childhood, and at the age of forty she reported receiving a divine command to publish her mystical experiences. Disbodenberg was a "double monastery," a common form of medieval institution that housed both male and female religious. It was lavishly endowed by the local gentry and enormously wealthy, permitting the monks and nuns to lead rather more comfortable lives than the Rule of St. Benedict strictly allowed. In around 1150, Hildegard along with twenty of her nuns left Disbodenberg to found a spartan new convent at Rupertsberg, near Bingen. She later established a second convent at Eibingen, across the Rhine from Bingen.

In such actions and in her writings, she established a reputation as a foe of churchly worldliness who minced no words. Her *Scivias*, written in a prophetic and apocalyptic style influenced by the books of Ezekiel and Revelation, was filled with denunciations of wickedness and vivid allegorical predictions of divine wrath to come. It caught the attention of another twelfth-century monastic reformer, St. Bernard of Clairvaux, a founder of the rigorous Cistercian order (to which Aelred of Rievaulx and in our own time, Thomas Merton, belonged). She and Bernard became fervent correspondents. Bernard secured Pope Eugenius III's approval of Hildegard's theology, and she began traveling all over Germany (a most unusual venture for a medieval abbess), rebuking and relating the contents of her visions to monks, clergymen, and secular officials. The emperor Frederick Barbarossa began writing for her advice and prayers, and her other correspondents (some three hundred of her letters are extant) included Henry II of England and his queen, Eleanor of Aquitaine, along with several popes. Her medical treatise, *Causes and Cures*, based on close observation of diseases, won her a lay, largely female, following that overran Rupertsberg seeking her counsel on physical ailments, marriage, and family troubles and constituting an audience for her "oracles," as she called them. To them, she was a seer, "the Sybil of the Rhine."

Others found her emotional tone, her mysterious prophecies, and her occasional orchestration of exorcisms irritating, and they disparaged her as a hysteric or a fraud. Hildegard wrote another scientific work, *Natural History*, and commentaries on the Gospels and St. Benedict's Rule. However, it was her striking poetry and music—more than seventy compositions—that marked her as one of the most creative minds of the Middle Ages. They consist mostly of liturgical songs meant to be inserted into the Mass, but her musical play, *Ordo Virtutum*, one of the first full-scale medieval dramas and the product of twenty years of labor, was an elaborate work whose cast included sixteen different virtues, all depicted as women, battling the devil for possession of the human soul. There is no record that

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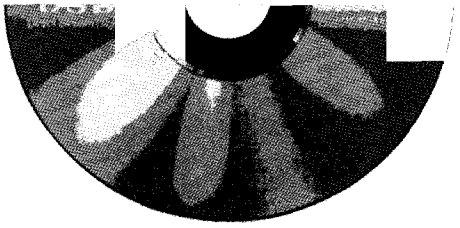

the play was ever performed in Hildegard's lifetime, but one of her correspondents accused her of letting the nuns run around on feastdays in brightly colored silk costumes instead of their habits—providing ammunition for the feminists of today who like to think of Hildegard as a dress-code rebel.

Sadly for them, Hildegard's theology was distressingly retrograde. She was devoted to the church: "O Ecclesia/ your eyes are like sapphires/ and your ears like the Mount of Bethel," she wrote in a hymn reminiscent of the Song of Solomon. Although she regularly portrayed divine wisdom ("Scientia Dei") as a gorgeously dressed female, it was always in a context that, far from implying goddess-worship, specifically paid homage to God Himself ("She is the splendor of the eternal light," Hildegard wrote of wisdom). In the illuminated manuscripts of her poetry, the virtue Charity kisses Christ, and Ecclesia holds a chalice to receive his blood from the cross.

Hildegard could use powerful erotic imagery to religious ends, as in this description of the marriage of Adam and Eve: "He races swiftly to the woman and she to him—she like a threshing floor pounded by his many strokes and brought to heat when the grains are threshed inside her." Lusty stuff for a nun, but medievals were not Victorians. Sad to say for feminists, Hildegard believed that women's strength rested on two old-fashioned pillars: virginity and maternity. If you took them away, all that was left was fluttery, self-absorbed feminine frailty, which was why Hildegard referred to her own lax time as an "effeminate age." She would have resonated to *Bridget Jones' Diary.*

Her convent in the Rhineland briefly got into trouble with the bishop

One wonders what's next for Hildegard in the trendy revisionism department: Bipolar depression? Fen shui? The Dr. Atkins Diet?

for burying an excommunicated nobleman on its grounds—so Hildegard is now the patron saint of discontented Catholics, especially unhappy nuns. The interdiction against Hildegard's convent lasted perhaps two months, and it came in 1179, the very last year of her life (despite her constant bouts of illness, she lived to age eighty). She took the position that it was sinful to dig up a body without good reason, and that the man in question had been reconciled with the church before he died. After an investigation prompted by Hildegard's impassioned letters, the bishop changed his mind and soon lifted the interdict.

On September 17, now celebrated as her feastday, Hildegard died. The church's failure to canonize her officially seemed to stem from procedural problems. Until Hildegard's lifetime, people were declared saints largely on local acclamation, which had led to the canonization of some less-than-saintly kings with posthumous political clout. In 1160, Pope Alexander III launched a more formal, evidentiary procedure for making saints, and canonization proceedings for Hildegard duly opened in 1233.

But for some reason, although Hildegard's personal effects, from the belt on her nun's robe to the breadcrumbs on her table, had been associated with miraculous healings during her lifetime, no one could report a similar miracle occurring after her death, a *sine qua non* for a declaration of sanctity. After a lifetime spent in exercising prodigious energy, Hildegard seemed to be taking a vacation. Nonetheless, in 1324, Pope John XII declared that Catholics could obtain a forty-day indulgence from Purgatory by observing her feastday at the church in Rupertsberg. In 1583, Hildegard's name was included in the Roman Martyrology, the church's Counter-Reformation catalogue of saints, and in 1979, the 800th anniversary of her death, Pope John Paul II referred to her as "an outstanding saint."

The current fascination with this towering woman who could separate the genuinely feminine from the merely effeminate has not produced all junk. There are some fine new works of scholarship about Hildegard, along with recordings of her music and reproductions of the spectacular illuminations that accompanied her manuscripts, some perhaps painted by Hildegard herself. I recommend *Hildegard of Bingen, 1098-1179: A Visionary Life*, by Sabina Flanagan, and Barbara Newman's *Sister of Wisdom: Saint Hildegard of Bingen's Theology of the Feminine.* But my favorite words about Hildegard are these brief and wry ones, written in 1924 by F. G. Holweck, domestic prelate to Pope Pius XI: "She denounced the vices of society, of kings, nobles, bishops and priests in unmeasured terms, but the Emperor, bishops, abbots and laymen came to ask for her advice." ◆

Charlotte Allen, who is writing a doctoral dissertation on the lives of the saints, is author of The Human Christ: The Search for the Historical Jesus *(The Free Press).*

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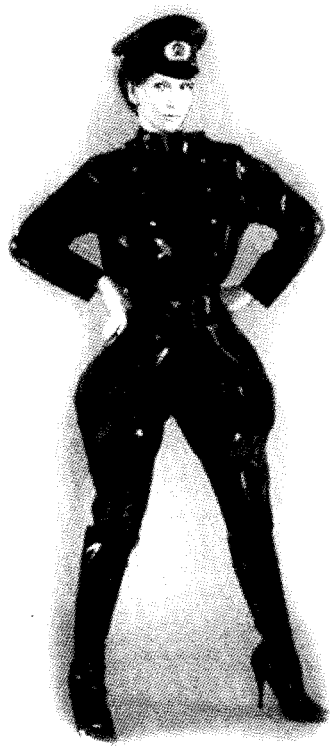
Stiffed—the movie version

"Home Box Office has acquired rights to the newly published Susan Faludi book, Stiffed: The Betrayal of the American Man, *and plans to turn it into a television drama next year."*

—New York Times, *Oct. 6, 1999*

Date: January 17, 2001
To: Susan Sarandon
From: HBO Entertainment Production Facilitation
Subject: Male insecurity on the set of S:BAM



Mark Lasswell envisions Susan Faludi's wounded guys whimpering on the set as director Susan Sarandon cracks the whip

THANKS FOR THE message about the latest difficulties on the set. Eye-opener! We all agreed from the beginning that this would be a daunting directorial challenge, and that's the way it turned out! Don't worry, Susan, nobody at our end blames you in the least. We do think, though, that a few notes might help. We've got to bring S:BAM in with only moderate additional injections of capital and before Faludi's sequel is published. (Thought: Maybe delaying until sequel's pub date would be smart? S:BAM could piggyback publicity for *Limp: A Few More Sniveling Guys I Met on the Book Tour.*) Here's what we came up with. Normally, we'd just say "keep in mind," but the suits at Time Warner are not at all happy, so a word to the wise.

● Mel's got to get over the whole blue-faced *Braveheart* strutting thing. And we don't care if he took a pay cut to do this. He's playing an emasculated victim of defense-contractor downsizing. Try this: He's already won an Academy Award for wearing a kilt, so what's the big deal about a nice Chanel suit? Plan B: If he walks out again, play Solomon and let him wear guy clothes and some interesting lingerie.

● In retrospect, maybe Tom wasn't such a great "get." He's mega-marquee, granted, but this is really turning into a prob. Our thought: Would it be a Mission Impossible (groan!) to get a camera into his trailer and get some of that stuff down on film? All the whimpering about "my so-called masculinity" would be fantastic for S:BAM. It's O.K. if the footage has that whole video-camera-in-a-briefcase-surveillance-tape-look—he's playing a loser locked up in a California jail anyway!

● Don't buy that innuendo from Sly about HBO sending signals that we want him behind the camera. You are our director. One of the assistant vice presidents here has read the book and says there's something in it about how society has brainwashed men into thinking they want to be in charge all the time, so now they feel really bad when they're not Mr. Control, even though deep inside they just want to be nice and cooperative. Get one of Sly's people to read that section—it's a start! (Thought: Maybe this is some kind of Method thing? He's playing that lame Promise Keeper with the stay-at-home-wife—God bless Meryl, she's a keeper!—maybe he's just "staying in character.")

● Yeah, yeah, yeah, Kevin's a genuine history buff. Indians. Baseball. Robin Hood. Fine. But he's not the historical adviser for this movie. Otherwise, why the hell are we writing those checks to Doris Kearns Goodwin? Kevin's got to come to grips with this: Daniel Boone was a wuss (DO NOT put it that way to K.C.). He's doing exactly what Faludi says people do: confusing Davy Crockett with Daniel Boone and confusing both of them with Fess Parker. We know you've told Kevin before, but tell him again: He doesn't get to wear the cap. No raccoons will be harmed in the making of this movie. Boone didn't even own a coonskin cap because he thought they were worn only by "uncivilized brutes." The guy could have been in PETA!

In closing, Susan, we just want to say that everybody here at HBO appreciates the invitation to join you and Tim in February on the special Carnival Lines "Cruise for Mumia" in the Caribbean—who'd have thought they could get Patricia Ireland and the Dalai Lama as co-hosts!—and we're sure it's a good cause. But we've got our hands full here. Does that Feb date mean you're going to wrap by then? You go, girl! ●

Mark Lasswell is a contributing editor at Allure.

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The Missing Persons of Domestic Violence: Battered Men

What happened when *Richard J. Gelles* unearthed statistics about women who abuse men? Death threats and other compliments

I MET ALAN and Faith nearly twenty-five years ago. I was in the process of interviewing men and women on what was then both a taboo topic and an issue that had been treated as an unmentionable personal trouble—violence in the family. I was one of the first researchers in the United States to attempt to study the extent, patterns, and causes of what I then called "conjugal violence," and what today advocates label "domestic violence." There was precious little research or information to guide my study—the entire scientific literature was two journal articles. With the exception of the tabloids, the media and daytime talk shows had not yet discovered the dark side of family relations.

Both Alan and Faith discussed their experiences with violence in their respective intimate relations and marriages. The violence was sometimes severe, including a stabbing and broken bones. And yet, Alan and Faith ended up as mere footnotes in my initial book, *The Violent Home.* I admit now and knew then that I had overlooked the stories of Alan and Faith. The reason that their stories were relegated to mere notes was that they did not fit the perceptual framework of my research. Although I called my study an examination of family or conjugal violence, my main focus, the issue I hoped to raise consciousness about, was violence toward women. Alan, as it turned out, had never hit his wife. The broken bones and abrasions that occurred in his home were inflicted by his wife. But Faith was

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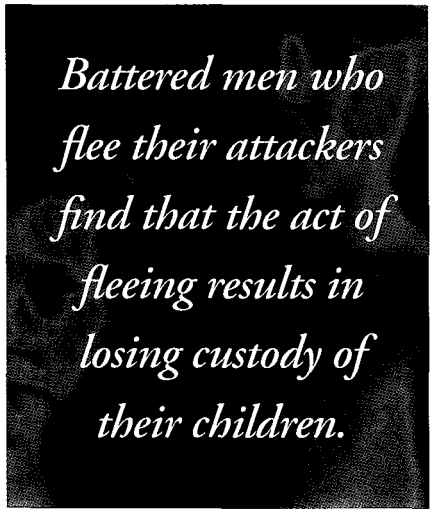
herself a victim of violence; her husband, ex-husband, and boyfriends had struck her and abused her numerous times. These events were dutifully counted and reported in my book and subsequent articles. Faith's situation was the focus of my article "Abused Wives: Why Do They Stay?" However, Faith's acts of violence, which included stabbing her husband while he read the morning paper, were reported only as a small quote in my book, with little analysis or discussion. In my first study of family violence, I had overlooked violence toward men. I would not, and could not, ever do that again.

My recognition of the issue of violence toward men came about in a strange way. In 1976, two years after my initial study of family violence, the American Sociological Association included a session on "Family Violence" as part of the association's annual meeting program. This was the first time this scholarly association had devoted precious meeting time and space to this topic. However, unlike most sessions, which are open to anyone registered for the meeting, this session required a reservation. I wrote the day I received my preliminary program to request admission to the session, and was subsequently informed that the session was "filled."

I do not believe I stopped to consider how or why a session could be completely filled as soon as it was announced. I was desperate, however, to link up with others in my field who were interested in the rarely studied topic of family violence. So, uninvited, I went to the session anyway and sat in the back of the room, hoping to hear what was going on, without being labeled a "gate crasher."

The session was held in a small ballroom, and there were about twenty people in attendance, all sitting in a circle. The room was far from overflowing. The session was chaired by two sociologists from Scotland who were about to publish their own book on family violence, titled *Violence Against Wives: A Case Against Patriarchy.* Much of the session focused on the application of feminist theory, or patriarchy theory, to explaining the extent and patterns of violence towards wives, both in contemporary society and over time and across cultures. Much of the discussion was informative and useful.



But eventually someone raised the question of whether men were also victims of domestic violence. The session leaders and many others in the group stated, categorically, there were no male victims of domestic violence. At this point, I raised my hand, risking discovery of being a gate crasher, and explained that I had indeed interviewed men and women who reported significant and sometimes severe violence toward husbands. I was not quite shouted down, but it was explained to me that I must certainly be wrong, and even if women did hit men, it was always in self-defense, and that women never used violence to coerce and control their partners, as did men.

Alan and Faith were suddenly no longer footnotes, but I did not fully appreciate the significance of this until two years later.

The research I conducted for *The Violent Home* was a small study, based on eighty interviews conducted in New Hampshire. That research pointed to the possibility that family violence was indeed widespread and the probability that social factors, such as income and family power, were causal factors. But the study was too small and too exploratory to be more than suggestive. To build a more solid knowledge base and an understanding of family violence, my colleagues Murray Straus and Suzanne Steinmetz and I conducted the First National Family Violence Survey in 1976.

The survey interviewed a nationally representative sample of 2,143 individual family members. The results were reported in a number of scholarly articles and, finally, in the book *Behind Closed Doors: Violence in the American Family.* What surprised my colleagues and me the most were the high rates of violence towards children, between siblings, toward parents, and between partners that were reported by those we interviewed. Up until this point, annual estimates of child abuse and wife abuse were placed in the hundreds of thousands and no higher than one million. But our study, based on self-reports, placed the rates in the one to two million range.

The most controversial finding, as it turned out, was that the rate of female-to-male intimate violence was the same as the rate of male-to-female violence. Not only that, but the rate of abusive female-to-male violence was the same as the rate of abusive male-to-female violence. When my colleague Murray Straus presented these

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findings in 1977 at a conference on the subject of battered women, he was nearly hooted and booed from the stage. When my colleague Suzanne Steinmetz published a scholarly article, "The Battered Husband Syndrome," in 1978, the editor of the professional journal published, in the same issue, a critique of Suzanne's article.

The response to our finding that the rate of female-to-male family violence was equal to the rate of male-to-female violence not only produced heated scholarly criticism, but intense and long-lasting personal attacks. All three of us received death threats. Bomb threats were phoned in to conference centers and buildings where we were scheduled to speak.

Suzanne received the brunt of the attacks—individuals wrote and called her university urging that she be denied tenure; calls were made and letters were written to government agencies urging that her grant funding be rescinded. All three of us became "nonpersons" among domestic violence advocates. Invitations to conferences dwindled and dried up. Advocacy literature and feminist writing would cite our research, but not attribute it to us. Librarians publicly stated they would not order or shelve our books.

The more sophisticated critiques were not personal, but methodological. Those critiques focused on how we measured violence. We had developed an instrument, "The Conflict Tactics Scales." The measure met all the scientific standards for reliability and validity, so the criticisms focused on content. First, the measure assessed acts of violence and not outcomes—so it did not capture the consequence or injuries caused by violence. Second, the measure focused on acts and not context or process, so it did not assess who struck whom and whether the violence was in self-defense. These two criticisms, that the measure did not assess context or consequence, became a mantra-like critique that continued for the next two decades.

Male victims do not count. The federal Violence Against Women Act identified domestic violence as a gender crime. None of the nearly billion dollars of funding from the act is directed towards male victims.

While the drumbeat of criticism continued, Murray Straus and I conducted the Second National Family Violence Survey in 1986. We attempted to address the two methodological criticisms of the Conflict Tactics Scales. In 1986 we interviewed a nationally representative sample of 6,002 individual family members over the telephone. This time we asked about the outcomes of violence and the process and context—who started the conflict and how.

The findings again included surprises. First, contrary to advocacy claims that there was an epidemic of child abuse and wife abuse, we found that the reported rates of violence toward children and violence toward women had declined. This made sense to us, as much effort and money had been expended between 1976 and 1986 to prevent and treat both child abuse and wife abuse. But female-to-male violence showed no decline and was actually higher and about as severe as male-to-female violence.

The examination of context and consequences also produced surprises. First, as advocates expected and as data from crime surveys bore out, women were much more likely to be injured by acts of domestic violence than were men. Second, contrary to the claim that women only hit in self-defense, we found that women were as likely to initiate the violence as were men. In order to correct for a possible bias in reporting, we re-examined our data looking only at the self-reports of women. The survey had asked subjects to talk about the last time there was partner violence: "In that particular instance, who started the physical contact, you or your spouse/partner?" The women reported similar rates of female-to-male violence compared to male-to-female, and women also reported they were as likely to initiate the violence as men.

When we reported the results of the Second National Family Violence Survey the personal attacks continued and the professional critiques simply ignored methodological revisions to the measurement instrument. This round of personal attacks was much more insidious—in particular, it was alleged that Murray had abused his wife. This is a rather typical critique in the field of family violence—men whose research results are contrary to political correctness are labeled "perps."

Up until now I have focused only on our own research. However, it is important to point out that our findings have been corroborated numerous times, by many different researchers, using many different methodological approaches. My colleague Murray Straus has found that every study among more than thirty describing

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some type of sample that is not self-selective (an example of self-selected samples are samples of women in battered woman shelters or women responding to advertisements recruiting research subjects; non-select selective samples are community samples, samples of college students, or representative samples) has found a rate of assault by women on male partners that is about the same as the rate by men on female partners. The only exceptions to this were the Justice Department's Uniform Crime Statistics, the National Crime Victims Survey, and the Department of Justice National Survey of Violence against Women. The Uniform Crime Statistics report the rate of fatal partner violence. While the rate and number for male and female victims was about the same twenty-five years ago, today female victims of partner homicide outnumber (and the rate is higher than) male victims. The National Crime Victims Survey and National Survey of Violence against Women both assess partner violence in the context of a crime survey. It is reasonable to suppose both men and women under-report female-to-male partner violence in a crime survey, since they do not conceptualize such behavior as a crime—whereas male-to-female violence is perceived as a crime.

It is worth repeating, however, that almost all studies of domestic or partner violence agree that women are the most likely to be injured as a result of partner violence.

Two new studies add to our understanding of partner violence and the extent of violence toward men. First, psychologist David Fontes conducted a study of domestic violence perpetrated against heterosexual men in relationships compared to domestic violence against heterosexual women.

Stop Beating Me, I've Got to Make a Phone Call

The Clinton administration created a national hotline. Does anybody use it?

by Kimberly Schuld

IMAGINE THE WORST: Some drunken brute in some town in the hinterlands is beating the dickens out of his wife. In desperation, the poor woman dials the National Domestic Violence Hotline—which is headquartered in Austin, Texas—and begs for help. What can the hotline do? Beyond telling the woman to hang up and call the cops—pronto!—and then to get in touch with local assistance, the hotline can't really provide much concrete help for a woman.

When, however, the Clinton administration set it up in 1996, the national hotline was heralded as a potential savior for women in the very throes of domestic violence. Advocates insisted that women could phone and receive immediate intervention. But on the face of it, this is curious—a woman who is being beaten needs the local cops, not tea and sympathy from someone thousands of miles away. Shelter information isn't important until the police have intervened and she is ready to leave her unwholesome environment. And, apparently, most female victims of domestic violence, facing immediate problems rather than theoretical ones, never think to dial the folks in Texas. Of course, part of this could be that the hotline is one of the best-kept secrets in America.

With little information about the hotline's services put out by those who lobbied for it and those who now run it, few women even know about it, much less think to utilize it. And what is the cost of this "service" that allegedly helps battered women? Well, like most things associated with the Violence Against Women Act, it didn't come cheap. For starters, the hotline receives $400,000 a year, provided out of the money for the Violence Against Women Act. Last year, it received an additional $1.2 million from the Department of Health and Human Services.

Since its inception three years ago, it has received a total of 375,000 calls, and the majority of these are from women who seek counseling rather than immediate intervention in a domestic dispute. We did the arithmetic—that breaks down to eleven dollars a call. Not only is 911 presumably faster and more helpful to a woman in danger, it was already in place. ◆

Kimberly Schuld is manager of Play Fair, the Independent Women's Forum's project that examines the unintended consequences of Title IX.

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The "Partner Conflict Survey" sample consisted of employees from the California Department of Social Services. Altogether, 136 surveys were returned out of 200 surveys distributed to employees in four locations (Sacramento, Roseville, Oakland, and Los Angeles). Not only did men experience the same rate of domestic violence as did women, but men reported the same rate of injury as did women.

More recently, a survey conducted by University of Wisconsin-Madison psychologist Terrie Moffit in New Zealand also found roughly the same rate of violence toward men as toward women in intimate relationships.

Most journalistic accounts and many scholarly examinations of domestic violence toward women include descriptions of the horrors of intimate violence. Reports of remarkable cruelty and sadism accompany reports on domestic violence. Fatal injuries, disabling injuries, and systematic physical and emotional brutality are noted in detail. I have heard many of these accounts myself and reported them in my own books, articles, and interviews.

The "horror" of intimate violence toward men is somewhat different. There are, of course, hundreds of men killed each year by their partners. At a minimum, one-fourth of the men killed have not used violence towards their homicidal partners. Men have been shot, stabbed, beaten with objects, and been subjected to verbal assaults and humiliations. Nonetheless, I do not believe these are the "horrors" of violence toward men. The real horror is the continued status of battered men as the "missing persons" of the domestic violence problem. Male victims do not count and are not counted. The Federal Violence Against Women Act identified domestic violence as a gender crime. None of the nearly billion dollars of funding from this act is directed towards male victims. Some "Requests for Proposals" from the U.S. Justice Department specifically state that research on male victims or programs for male victims will not even be reviewed, let alone funded. Federal funds typically pass to a state coalition or to a branch of a state agency designated to deal with violence against women.

Protecting only the female victim and punishing only the male offender will not resolve the tragedy of domestic violence.

Battered men face a tragic apathy. Their one option is to call the police and hope that a jurisdiction will abide by a mandatory or presumptive arrest statute. But when the police do carry out an arrest on a male beating, they tend to engage in the practice of "dual arrest" and arrest both parties.

Battered men who flee their attackers find that the act of fleeing results in the men losing physical and even legal custody of their children. Those men who stay are thought to be "wimps" at best, and "perps" at worst, since if they stay, it is believed they are the true abusers in the home.

Thirty years ago battered women had no place to go and no place to turn for help and assistance. Today, there are places to go—more than 1,800 shelters—and many agencies to which to turn. For men, there still is no place to go and no one to turn to. On occasion a shelter for battered men is created, but it rarely lasts—first because it lacks on-going funding, and second because the shelter probably does not meet the needs of male victims. Men, for example, who retain their children in order to try to protect them from abusive mothers, often find themselves arrested for "child kidnapping."

The frustration men experience often bursts forth in rather remarkable obstreperous behavior at conferences, meetings, and forums on domestic violence. Such outbursts are almost immediately turned against the men by explaining that this behavior proves the men are not victims but are "perps."

Given the body of research on domestic violence that finds continued unexpectedly high rates of violence toward men in intimate relations, it is necessary to reframe domestic violence as something other than a "gender crime" or an example of "patriarchal coercive control." Protecting only the female victim and punishing only the male offender will not resolve the tragedy and costs of domestic violence. While this is certainly not a politically correct position, and is a position that will almost certainly ignite more personal attacks against me and my colleagues, it remains clear to me that the problem is violence between intimates not violence against women. Policy and practice must address the needs of male victims if we are to reduce the extent and toll of violence in the home. ◆

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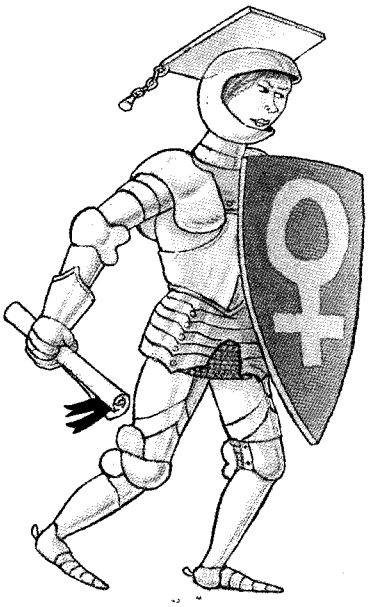

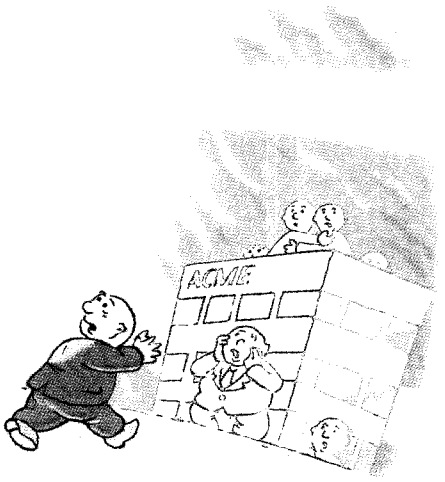

I Have a Degree in Women's Studies, So Why Can't I Pay the Rent?

Christine Stolba looks into what women's studies majors do after college. Her advice: Don't do it unless you have a family fortune

When Jane Bolin, a political science major with a concentration in women's studies, graduated from Radford University in 1997, she envisioned coming to Washington and joining the feminist cause. Instead, after a brief stint at a political research firm, she has embarked on a very different career path: Bolin is training to be a defensive end for the fledgling Women's Professional Football League in Minneapolis.

Unlike some fields of study, women's studies boasts few famous graduates—perhaps the best known is Rory Kennedy, youngest child of Robert Kennedy, who majored in women's studies at Brown University and is now a documentary filmmaker, producing works such as *Different Moms*, which explored how mentally handicapped parents raise children with normal intelligence.

But few women's studies majors have the comfort of a Kennedy-size fortune; ultimately they will have to earn a living. Even in today's booming economy, humanities majors have a harder time finding permanent employment after college than do business, science, or engineering majors.

Debates over the merits of women's studies usually focus on oddities in the curriculum (courses that explore "theories of sadomasochism," for example) and dubious pedagogical methods (teachers who promote radical feminist ideology). Rarely do they consider the practical issue of employment. Do the skills women's studies majors acquire in seminars translate into jobs once they leave that sheltering cocoon?

The National Center for Education Statistics reports that a total of 681 degrees, excluding doctorates, were conferred in women's studies during the 1995-1996 school year, the most recent for which data are available.

This is a relatively small number of degrees—comparable to the number granted annually in Afro-American studies or botany, for example—and far fewer than the 10,000 plus degrees granted in journalism or education.

But in addition to those receiving formal degrees in women's studies, many students who earn degrees in the humanities either minor in women's studies, or have a "concentration" in women studies, or earn a separate women's studies certificate.

The National Women's Studies Association compiles no official statistics on the number or fate of women's studies graduates in the U.S. When asked, a representative of the organization offered the cheery but not particularly helpful response that a degree in women's studies is just as useful as any humanities degree. In fact, the group has an aversion to hard data. As a report put out by the association (but

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paid for by the federal government) noted, the organization is "wary of aggregate statistics and generalizations that too often erase significant insights or particular groups of people." Their preferred method of analysis, employed frequently in their literature, is the personal testimonial.

Since the national organization does not collect hard data on how graduates fare in the real world, one would hope that individual women's studies departments—perhaps spurred by the queries of anxious parents—would make more of an effort to figure out what women's studies majors do with their degrees. But again, evidence is scanty.

One study of women's studies graduates—paid for by the U.S. Department of Education—was conducted by Elaine Reuben and Mary Jo Boehm Strauss in 1980. After examining a wide range of programs, they concluded that "career uses, as traditionally understood, were a relatively minor consideration in the original public or self-image of most programs."

The few employment details Reuben and Strauss did uncover were either advertisements for academic positions—which excluded undergraduates since they required an advanced degree—or listings for "feminist writer/researchers or clerical staff for women's organizations." Judging by the information coming from women's studies programs, women's studies majors were well qualified for little but the pink-collar ranks of the feminist bureaucracy.

Apparently, not much has changed. When asked to assess the job options available to their students, women's studies programs flit between vague pronouncements about the well-roundedness of a women's studies education and suggestions for future employment that disproportionately favor work in the feminist bureaucracy. Emory University's women's studies program recommends that graduates go to law school, graduate school, or get a job at a campus women's center; Albion College in Michigan boasts that some of its graduates work in the fields of domestic violence and "reproductive choice." At the State University of New York, New Paltz, some of the 130 women's studies majors who have graduated from the program since 1979 are "working in women's health services, battered women's shelters, rape counseling services, and services for pregnant teenagers." Similarly, Arizona State University lists its grads as working in rape research, sexual abuse therapy counseling, and on staff at the college's Commission on the Status of Women.

Women's studies graduates from the University of Massachusetts, Boston, work as "feminist therapists"—whatever that is—and train as lawyers so that they can "work toward positive social changes for women using law as a tool," according to departmental literature.

Departments also frequently point to a 1995 study by Barbara Luebke and Mary Ellen Reilly called *Women's Studies Graduates: The First Generation.* The book consists of a collection of first-person accounts of students who majored in women's studies in the 1980s, and its methodology is hardly rigorous: The authors asked women's studies directors to "choose graduates who reflected the diversity of their programs." Not surprisingly, the majority of the eighty-nine respondents offer panegyrics to the life-altering force of women's studies.

The survey does reveal that women's studies majors hold diverse jobs—as lawyers, bakers, and even flight instructors. But, after wading through tedious testimonials that either dissolve into details of the writer's personal life ("With men I have become more assertive, even aggressive...[but] I am trying to practice being gentler and softer—partly because I've found the earlier approach can backfire") or rant about women's oppression ("Here we are 50 percent of the population making none of the decisions about our future... We live in a frightening time") one is left with the distinct impression that these women's careers happened in spite of, rather than because of, their women's studies major. Of the eighty-nine women's studies majors interviewed, all but eighteen were earning under $30,000. Eight reported no personal income at all.

Colleen Sandrin, a hospital foundation administrator, tells Luebke and Reilly that "I'm not sure if my women's studies major affected my professional career." Instead, she notes that it affected the "basic nature of my being." That being "find[s] most men weak, an attribute beneficial to my career, but difficult to deal with on a day-to-day basis in my personal life." Nancy Arnold, a Unitarian Universalist minister who attended Harvard Divinity School after completing her women's studies major at University of Massachusetts, Amherst, also seems to have received greater psychological benefits than professional ones from her major: "I suffer from chronic low self-esteem and sometimes depression. Women's studies and the faculty and students helped me to understand 'my' failings in a more systemic way. By looking at the cultural cultivation of myself as a woman, I was able to make sense of my life experience." She now considers herself "woman-identified."

While the Rev. Arnold is "woman-

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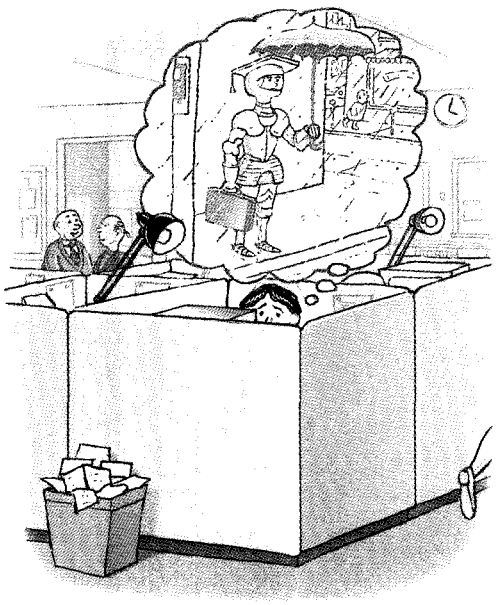
identified," it is clear that a large number of women's studies graduates and their instructors are feminist-identified. In a recent newsletter, the director of the women's studies department at Queens College praised the alliance the department had made with Eleanor Smeal's Feminist Majority Foundation and its college recruiting arm, the Feminist Majority Leadership Alliance. Many courses of study recommend "hands-on" work experience in organizations such as Planned Parenthood, the National Organization for Women (NOW), and the Feminist Majority Foundation. The women's studies department at the University of Wisconsin, Whitewater, for example, encourages its students to pursue internships with NOW and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, and many women's studies departmental websites include helpful links to major feminist organizations.

A call to NOW confirmed that the organization does hire women's studies majors, although a representative refused to provide details about the kind of work new graduates can expect to perform there. While women's studies departments may insist their majors are theoretically qualified to hold any number of challenging jobs, ultimately the jobs they are most prepared for are those in the ever-expanding universe of feminist organizations.

Sarah Luthens, a women's studies graduate from the University of Missouri and now a union organizer, said that her major "directly helped in landing" her a series of jobs. Of course, these jobs were "explicitly feminist" (including a stint as an investigator at the EEOC) and reaffirmed her belief that "we must transform the primary oppressive forces—sexism, racism/anti-Semitism, classism, homophobia, ageism, physicalism, speciesism, and nationalism." There was one drawback to her education: "As a student I did not realize I needed a strategy for being able to support myself economically," Ms. Luthens says, "and I have suffered the psychic violence of poverty."

Most of the departments that provide details of their graduates proudly note the frequency with which so many of them enter the world of feminist non-profits and lobbying organizations. Indeed, the National Women's Studies Association explicitly states in its literature that "what we teach, and the way we teach it, encourages students to imagine alternatives to present systems of inequality and participate in political transformation." Hence they seek "to replicate in the academic setting the powerful transformative effect of the consciousness-raising techniques of the early women's movement."



The National Women's Studies Association received funding from the U.S. Department of Education in 1992 to assess the pedagogical purpose of women's studies. Here was an opportunity for women's studies leaders to describe their approach to teaching and to correct misrepresentations about the skills their students were acquiring. Alas, they used taxpayer dollars to pose questions such as: "Does women's studies cultivate personal empowerment and social responsibility? How successfully does women's studies support students as they express their feminism on campus?"

When asked to describe what they have learned in their women's studies classes, students offer disturbing answers. A women's studies student at Wellesley College happily proclaims that women's studies "has given me a chance to write papers about things I care about, and it has given me 'ammunition,' for lack of a better word, against those who try and beat me down." Another student writes in garbled prose that women's studies has "given me a bit of more confidence that...books aren't always the key; that sometimes the answers are right inside of you."

Experience-based learning serves as the linchpin of the women's studies curriculum; indeed, the National Women's Studies Association notes with approval that "a neat and clean separation of abstract ideas from personal experience, which is so characteristic of most traditional courses, was missing" among the women's studies majors it surveyed. In addition, the transformative power of the curriculum is extolled. Women's studies major Katharine Rossi, now a part-time store clerk, said that the field makes students "see how various social systems feed into patriarchy and perpetuate it. You get angry that people allow this oppression and then you act to change the systems of power and oppression." One student at Old Dominion University simply "felt like I had a completely new brain" after

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completing her women's studies coursework.

Women's studies graduate Stacy Dorian, a law librarian, claims that women's studies (ostensibly a major open to both sexes) "makes you confident in your abilities as a woman and reinforces one's belief that there is something seriously wrong with a world created and dominated by white men." Though she admits she is dissatisfied with her current employment situation, Ms. Dorian finds ample opportunity to use her knowledge of women's studies "to educate fellow workers" about the "policies, jokes, comments that I find to be racist, sexist, ageist, ableist, or homophobic."

James Madison University's women's studies department unwittingly touches on the conundrum of women's studies when it notes on its website that "the challenge for the women's studies graduate is to demonstrate imaginatively to prospective employers the distinctive advantages of an education that includes women's studies." Women's studies majors have to be imaginative for a reason: unlike other majors, their skills are less visible and their liabilities more glaring to a prospective employer.

Many women's studies majors have been trained in ideology and emotion rather than practical skills. While other disciplines within the humanities are equally impractical, they focus on imparting intellectual rigor rather than ideological vigor. Self-actualization and empowerment are not necessarily unworthy aims, but what happens when they are made the whole of an education? One doesn't often hear engineering graduates talking about "empowerment"—but then, engineering graduates are finding jobs hand over fist.

Many women's studies graduates know this instinctively and act accordingly: When applying for positions outside the feminist establishment, they don't always reveal that they majored in women's studies. "I actually have a hard time telling just anyone," graduate Lisa Hall conceded in Luebke and Reilly's study. "I usually say 'liberal arts' and hope for no further comment." Another graduate, profiled in Luebke and Reilly's book, said that "in some ways, I don't think being a major has affected me professionally at all. No one has ever hired me because I was a major!" She noted that during the hiring process at a law firm, "I had to assure them that I didn't 'hate' men."

Megan Mitchell, a graduate student, says that "because of many negative responses I no longer tell everyone I meet about my major." Erica Strohl, a sexual abuse educator and graduate of the University of Pennsylvania, avoids the problem by avoiding jobs "where having women's studies would be viewed as a negative or nonacademic major." Indeed, her resume is an elaborate ruse to downplay her women's studies activities. "I'm sneaky!" she says, noting that she lists her summer internships with feminist lawmakers not by the official's name or the feminist policy issues she worked on, but by listing the building in which she worked, such as "State Office Building." Of the eighty-nine graduates interviewed by Luebke and Reilly, eleven of them—those in graduate school or in a profession—insisted on anonymity. So much for empowerment.

Although the intrepid Jane Bolin enthusiastically discussed her experience in women's studies with potential employers, she found that she was often "pigeonholed as a liberal" for doing so. Happily for Jane, her love of athletics led to her present employment as a football player.

Remarkably, leaders in women's studies interpret public wariness about women's studies as ignorance—or worse. A women's studies graduate of Kansas State University believes that while it might be common to question the usefulness of a particular college major, doing so with women's studies is "reflective of a narrowness of thought." Judy Bryant, a self-described "teacher/writer/artist," used to take skepticism about her major personally. But then she realized that people were "threatened" by her: "I learned to understand that I am a threat precisely because I ask questions, because I say no, because my primary relationships are with women, because I care and am committed to justice."

In fact, employers' concerns stem from the fact that many of the "skills" women's studies majors acquire have little practical use outside the insular world of professional feminism. Defenders of women's studies will remind critics, as authors Reuben and Strauss put it, that women's studies students are "knowledgeable about the causes and effects of sex discrimination and determined to gain equitable treatment for themselves and others" and hence "seem particularly well-equipped to overcome barriers of sex discrimination in graduate study or in the workplace." The sad fact is that they have to get a job before they will be able to showcase their skills as discrimination detectives. Here's the hard lesson many women's studies programs don't teach: empowerment does not necessarily lead to employment. ◆

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KARLYN BOWMAN'S

Poll-Pourri

Older and Wiser

In the late 1980s, two pollsters asked baby boomers to think about their activities during the 1960s. Their responses paint a picture at odds with popular impressions of the period. They also provide some clues about public reactions to stories of possible cocaine use by George W. Bush. Yankelovich Clancy Shulman, in a 1988 poll for *Time* magazine, asked baby boomers whether they used marijuana in the 1960s and 1970s.

Only 8 percent of thirty to forty-four-year-olds said they had used it regularly, and 26 percent said they used it occasionally. When asked about their current use of marijuana, far fewer, 11 percent, admitted to using it. Eighty-five percent said they never did. When baby boomers were asked to think back to the changes that occurred in drug use in the 1960s and 1970s, nearly nine in ten pronounced them mostly bad.

Only 28 percent described their political views as conservative in the 1960s and early 1970s (35 percent remembered being moderates, 31 percent liberals, and 6 percent radicals). When asked about their current views, a much larger share, 41 percent, called themselves conservatives, 36 percent moderates, 21 percent liberals, and 2 percent radicals. Sixty-four percent said their political views were more conservative than they had been in the past. When asked what explained the changes in their beliefs and values, three-quarters said assuming family responsibilities had had a major effect on them.

Peter D. Hart Research Associates, in a poll for *Rolling Stone*, got more specific. In the 1988 poll, 18 percent of eighteen to thirty-four-year-olds said they had used cocaine. When asked about their current drug use compared to the past, only about 5 percent of the thirty to thirty-nine-year-old age group said it had increased, and about 35 percent said it had decreased. Sixty percent said they didn't use drugs at all.

Another question shows the natural conservatism of age. They were asked, "When we were younger, all of us had images of what we would be like when we grew up. Compared to how you thought you would turn out as an adult, are you...?" Fifty-four percent said they were more conservative than they expected to be, and 27 percent less.

The picture painted by the media of widespread drug use in the 1960s is, if the poll findings can be trusted, a distorted one, but it probably explains to some degree public willingness to look past youthful recklessness in judging candidates. When asked by Fox News and Opinion Dynamics in August: "If you knew that a presidential candidate had only experimented with drugs such as cocaine in his or her twenties or thirties, do you think that is enough to disqualify the candidate or should it be forgiven?" Seventeen percent said it should be enough to disqualify the person, but 72 percent said it should be forgiven. The results from a mid-August Yankelovich Partners survey for *Time* were similar. Eleven percent said cocaine use by Bush in his twenties should disqualify him, and 84 percent said it should not. Eighty-four percent in an August ABC poll said that if Bush had used cocaine when he was younger, it would make no difference in their vote for president.

Cocktails Before Dinner? Shocking!

In a 1980 poll for a PBS election special, Gallup probed reactions to characteristics or behaviors in a president. Seventy percent said they would strongly object if a president smoked marijuana, 43 percent if he told ethnic or racial jokes in private, 38 percent if he were not a member of a church, 36 percent if he used tranquilizers occasionally, 33 percent if he used profane language in private, 30 percent if he saw a psychiatrist, and 21 percent if he wore blue jeans to the Oval Office occasionally. Seventeen percent would object strongly if he were divorced, and 14 percent if he had a cocktail before dinner. ◆

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Let 'Em Eat *Cake*

Meet Bill Plante of CBS. He demands the wine list in small town eateries. *Dave Shiflett* puts media snobs on the grill

Why do Americans hate the media? I've been on the road interviewing people frantically worried about a Y2K meltdown, and have been struck by their deep distrust of the national media. Of course, one expects as much amongst mouth-breathing survivalists, rapturists, and others of an apocalyptic mindset. But this distrust extends to left-wingers, who are supposedly at one with the press. As one Tennessee activist and self-professed "sixties radical" complained, the corporate-dominated media and the corporate-controlled politicians have played down Y2K because they don't want to unleash a panic that will upset the stock market. She suspected a grand plutocratic conspiracy.

She was onto something. But she hadn't quite got it right. I quickly set her straight: "You're not experiencing a conspiracy, my dear. What you're seeing is a caste system at work. National pols and national hacks see the world pretty much the same way, and they just don't happen to be worried about your issue." To complete her education, I turned to the journalistic component of this caste (the primary target of this brief jeremiad). "They have very little in common with the bumpkins they allegedly serve, and try to avoid them whenever possible. Indeed, when they venture into the hinterlands to interview Mr. and Mrs. Jones, they check the bottom of their shoes on the way out of the Jones' house."

This activist went to bed much wiser than she'd woken up. Yet her enlightenment had come at a cost. She could never again believe the claim of innumerable news organizations: "We're On Your Side!" She could no longer believe that the press serves as the eyes, ears, nose, and voice of the common citizen. She could no longer believe in a truly adversarial press. She was left with only one consolation: The same media bigwigs who have such a keen nose for phonies are among the biggest phonies on earth. As it happens, this insight transforms news consumption into a profoundly comic experience, so as consolations go this is one of no little value.

It is all but impossible for an enlightened consumer to restrain the chuckle impulse while watching millionaire pundits and anchors castigate fellow millionaire politicians—usually of Republican stripe—for being "out of touch" with the common citizen. George Bush's supermarket scanner scandal was a notable example of this phenomenon (and a cooked-up story, it appears), and the possum-eyed plutocrat Steve Forbes is regularly lashed along these lines. Wealthy politicians, it is asserted, cannot fairly represent the interests of non-wealthy people. In this instance, the carping journalists are

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playing an old part: Comforting the afflicted, and afflicting the comfortable.

Yet there are few groups so comfortable as journalists, especially at the national level, where the salaries are high, the perks are premier, and the look down the nose at commoners is steep and deep. So comfortable are these fat hacks, in fact, that even plutocrats like Forbes seem comparatively down to earth. Forbes, at least, knows better than to enter a greasy spoon and demand a good bottle of wine. Not so famed television correspondent Bill Plante, who has been known to get snooty if a half-star eatery cannot provide a four-star bottle of vino. "Whenever we went on the campaign trail," recalled one correspondent, "he'd always demand top quality wine—in places like Kansas and Idaho! I remember once when he was disgusted with the wine they had brought and ordered 'the one with the straw on it.' He was speaking of Chianti, of course, and he said it in a fairly condescending way."

Plante isn't the only pressman to come across like Thurston Howell III, the *Gilligan's Island* millionaire. Much beloved newsman Walter Shapiro is said routinely to ask locals where to find the restaurants with "white table cloths." New Yorker Shapiro, a denizen of the Upper West Side, was asked, while in Little Rock, if he wanted to go out for Chinese food at a restaurant named Fu Lin. "Eat Chinese in Little Rock? What kind of a fool do you think I am?" he exploded. Fu Lin, it turned out, was owned by the soon-to-be-infamous Charlie Trie.

Meanwhile, a *Washington Post* story indicates the traveling White House press corps enjoys a menu that would make King Farouk's eyes spin. The typical American would give up a lung to eat this well. The daily feeding schedule consists of five meals, featuring such delights as almond-crusted French toast, barbecued beef, pork, and chicken; shrimp cocktail and fried catfish; bacon, eggs, and ham; filet mignon, wine, and beer. In this same spirit, the White House Correspondents Association insists that a hot meal be provided on any flight of an hour or more. One is reminded of the great pagan apologist Libanus' observation of the decidedly non-egalitarian Christian monks of the fourth century: "They eat like elephants and keep the servants busy with their drinking."

None of which is to suggest there's anything wrong with liking a good meal. But the typical American is suspicious of people who fret about their stomach. Such people are thought to be precious, dainty, and possessed by a grating sense of self-importance. They also lack existential perspective. A time-honored line about showboat diners nicely sums up the latter point: "I wonder if they also [bleep] in French."

Besides being richer and better fed than the typical American, the national journalist enjoys perks that put one more in mind of Marie Antoinette (pre-guillotine) than Mother Teresa. Consider the ubiquitous use of limousines. Even Christopher Hitchens, supposed socialist and man of the people, demands limo service. According to a *Washington Post* story written during Hitchens' dust-up with fellow patrician Sidney Blumenthal, Hitchens insisted that a limo pick him up from the airport and deliver him to Elaine's, a noted Manhattan proletarian hangout. The typical American, of course, enjoys the services of a limo driver on extremely limited occasions, such as prom night and on the day of his own funeral.

Television correspondents, especially at the upper level, often don't even dress themselves (relying on "personal shoppers"), drive themselves, cook or clean. In fact, they don't undertake the thousands of common tasks that make common lives common. It shows up in their attitudes. With rare exceptions they are reminiscent of that of the neighborhood rich kid who, on a cold morning at Scout camp, handed you a dollar bill and said, "How about warming up that toilet seat?"

There are other well-known and cosmic differences, especially the fact that national journalists tend to reject the common citizen's God while secretly adhering to an almost orthodox faith in the Democratic Party. Less discussed, but equally profound, is their extremely friendly attitude toward political power, which normal Americans typically fear. There's also a great deal of back-rubbing, butt-bussing, and career-swapping between journalists and politicians. Common Americans can only look on in horror.

The Monica Lewinsky scandal comes to mind. This scandal shocked many Americans—not so much because the president had succumbed to the charms of a large-rumped slut, which was hardly surprising, but because of the huge knot of toads that hopped forward in his defense. These egregious and nearly subhuman people usually stay in the background, but suddenly they were all over the networks, often hopping from one show to the next, parading their brown noses as if they were Nobel Prizes. The elite media did, of course, engage in a brief spat with the president when they realized he'd lied to them.

Pedants will argue for centuries over which symbol of this scandal etched itself deepest into the national psyche:

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the Gap stain, the president's wagging finger, or the spooky visage of James Carville. My vote goes to the last. Perhaps the most troubling aspect of the Carville presence was the high regard in which he was clearly held by those who interviewed him. One wished a host would reach over occasionally and slap him upside the head and tell him to seek honorable employment. Instead, they fawned over him, and continuously begged him to return.

The throne-sniffing reached a nadir in Tina Brown's purple passages about the president after she beheld Him at a Washington caste party. While the typical American had begun to write off Clinton as a common lecher, the legendary Brown praised his hair, his eyes, and his perceived invitation to come "join him in the present." Some of us detected a coded message: "Please, Bill, come to New York and Screw Me Silly!" Similarly, a national magazine correspondent said she would like to perform the "non-sexual" technique now known as The Monica on the president as a reward for his support of abortion rights. The illusion of an adversarial press can hardly be maintained in this era.

Thick as thieves. Fat as sheiks. Rich as royals. Prissy as debutantes. Or, to steal a line from Scott Fitzgerald: These people are different from you and me. Nor is it hard to believe that, given their druthers, they would prefer to govern America without having to wander among the commoners.

They consider us lepers, and we should probably return the favor. ◆

Dave Shiflett is a writer in Midlothian, Virginia.

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proper way to approach children: discipline and ethics. It is wrong to bring in law suits, courts, "gender experts," and "harassment workshoppers" when it comes to the misbehavior of ten-year-olds!

TWQ: Do you mean they actually have "experts" holding workshops on harassment by kids in the fourth grade?

SOMMERS: The Department of Education has funded anti-harassment programs for children as young as five. One curriculum guide, *Girls and Boys Getting Along*, has children, including kindergartners, practice reciting, "Stop it. That's sexual harassment, and sexual harassment is against the law." It also includes a special anti-harassment pledge for second and third graders: "I pledge to do my best to stop sexual harassment...." I guess they say it along with the Pledge of Allegiance—or perhaps in place of it. Another guide, also funded by the Department of Education, considers schoolyard chasing behavior. The game of tag, for example, which may seem an innocent playground pastime, has features that promote fear and aggression. The authors suggest a non-competitive version of tag, "where no one is ever out," called Circle of Friends. This is ridiculous.

These "gender experts" are politicizing kindergarten. They are treating normal healthy boys as predators. Most parents have no idea what their children are facing. As for the children themselves, they are in no position to complain. ◆

Christina Hoff Sommers is the author of Who Stole Feminism? *Her new book,* The War Against Boys *(Simon & Shuster), is scheduled for publication in July. She is the W. H. Brady Fellow at the American Enterprise Institute in Washington, D.C.*

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qualified teacher is virtually guaranteed a job for life, thanks to the powerful United Federation of Teachers.

A spokesman for the teachers' union, Ron Davis, did not dispute that some teachers lack basic skills. But, said Davis, they "shouldn't have been hired in the first place." The union strongly opposes any effort to weed out incompetents, such as mid-career testing. Predictably, the union blames lack of teacher quality on New York's pay scale—salaries range from about $30,000 to $67,000 a year. The union's contention is strongly disputed both by school system critics and by state officials, who complain that billions each year are squandered by the city's vast education bureaucracy.

In June, Rudy Crew, who has long defended the slow-moving system over which he presides, grudgingly bowed to pressure and proposed phasing in an end to the school system's long-standing and destructive policy of "social promotion"—the continual grade advancement of students who can't do the work. Crew to date has refused to comment on teacher illiteracy.

Bad teachers, of course, learned their poor skills somewhere. The City University system, the single largest supplier of New York's teachers, has suffered in recent years from a precipitous drop in standards, thanks to its policy of open enrollment. The state is now threatening to yank CUNY's right to mint new teachers, if things don't improve.

"Why is he not learning or learning so but so little with my help"?

In just 14 words, the teacher inadvertently answers his own question. ◆

Andrea Peyser is a columnist for the New York Post.

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One last observation . . .

Why Teachers is Illiterate

Andrea Peyser Reports from New York

"Why is he not learning or learning so but so little with my help. How comes his past teachers have been passing him from grade to grade without he advancing or progressing academicly.

"I will like to know what is causing the mental blockage."

THIS BARELY COHERENT statement, complete with shoddy grammar and unfortunate spelling, was not, as one might expect, penned by a low-functioning second-grader. These words are taken verbatim from a student evaluation written by a New York City public school teacher.

New York's schools—with 1.1 million students, the largest taxpayer-funded system in the nation—are the shame of a great city. And the dire consequences of this vast education wasteland echo far beyond the school halls. Each year, thousands of teens who have been pushed from grade to grade without mastering the ability to read and write are dumped into the street, diplomas in hand. According to a recent survey of area business leaders, potential employers have little confidence in the value of a New York City high school diploma.

Why can't Johnny read? You won't get the answer from clock-punching bureaucrats. But this past May, as city schools Chancellor Rudy Crew petulantly threatened to quit—for the second time—in the face of harsh criticism from reform-minded Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, I helped shed light on one of the school system's ugliest secrets. As a

columnist for the *New York Post*, I got my hands on evidence of an institutional malady that many have long suspected, but that has rarely been documented: rampant teacher illiteracy.

These examples are culled from notes and evaluations authored by teachers of a Brooklyn elementary school. The writings give a rare glimpse into a problem that many who work in the system insist is widespread. (All spelling and grammatical errors are the teachers'.)

Here, a teacher complains about his student's short attention span and hyperactivity: "He does very little class work. Likes to figh most of the time. He does not take to many things serious. He's very high proactive." Another teacher writes that her student's "work habits is very poor." One child's "lisp is so handicapped to his school that it upstruck his classwork," observes one educator.

Another child is "esaily distracted," and exhibits "violate behavior, and does not hear to rules and regulations," writes his teacher. "He never spoke of anything against him or exhibit questionable behavior otherwise," jots yet another educator. "At this point, I feel he should discontinued counseling." Addressing her colleagues in the union, a teacher reports, "Reorganization grievances has to be filed within 2 days." One teacher writes about a student's "studdering" problem. Another reports that a child suffers from "incontenance of urine. Please evulate."

The epidemic of teacher illiteracy may be traced to fuzzy-headed 1960s- and '70s-style notions that children learn best from those to whom they can "relate." In their frenzy to achieve racial quotas, many administrators have deemed a teacher candidate's competence to be of relatively little importance, complains a veteran employee of the Brooklyn school from which the writing samples were taken.

"I think the new teaching force coming in over recent years is, for the most part, unqualified," said the employee, who spoke on condition of anonymity. Once absorbed into the institutional fabric, even the least *Continued on page 30*

Drawing by Sandy McClelland

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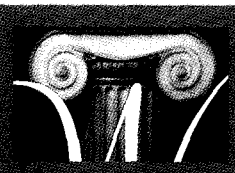

"The Independent Women's Forum is a nonpartisan, pro-free-market think tank very much devoted to having women do what they feel like doing."
~ P. J. O'Rourke

For the past seven years, the Independent Women's Forum has been taking on the old establishment of feminist organizations—and winning. "The IWF has a profile almost unheard of for a group that is the new kid on the block," writes the *Boston Globe*. "In the marketplace of ideas, from the national news media all the way down to local radio, the IWF has shown its real strength....[The] IWF is well on its way to becoming the foremost media nemesis of the feminist movement."

Why has the IWF been so successful? Because the women who make up the IWF are not radical ideologues—they're businesswomen, economists, lawyers, truck drivers, and also mothers. Because the IWF promotes individual responsibility, strong families, limited government, and opportunity—policies that help *all* Americans. Because the IWF, a nonpartisan, nonprofit Washington organization, sponsors speaker events and conferences noted for their provocative and free-ranging debates. And because the IWF publishes *The Women's Quarterly*—an intellectual antidote to political correctness—which syndicated columnist Mona Charen praises as, "My type of women's magazine! With humor and sarcasm but also with warmth and passion, these women offer an intelligent refutation of the leading feminist nonsense that is swallowed so uncritically by the mainstream press."

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